HARVEY Landrum

by Ridley Wills

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HARVEY LANDRUM

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A Novel

By

RIDLEY WILLS

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HARVEY LANDRUM

CHAPTER I

BEGINNING with his first birthday, which was the day he was born, William Simmons lived for more than twenty years on West Union Street, near the station crossing of the L. & C. Railroad. The city was Jackson.

There was only one house between his home and the railway tracks, and that house was a sort of hotel . . . the sort that sustains itself on the sediment of late night trains when it seems more convenient to travelers to suffer the inconveniences of an old and somewhat inelegant hotel than to go to the better hostelry farther away from the station. This hotel was known as "The Landrum House," and was so advertised by a sign that swung in the wind before the door. William Simmons remembers when the sign was new . . . even the incident of its erection by the dowdy landlady, Mrs. Landrum, who always wore a full set of curl-papers in her greasy hair. When William was a little boy, he associated curl-papers with the character of

Mrs. Landrum as he associated red curls with the quality of her crippled daughter, Mattie. It was a funny thing, Mrs. Landrum always wore curl-papers which never hatched into curls; while Mattie, who never wore curl-papers, always had curls. Mattie's curls were beautiful, so beautiful indeed that every wisp of red hair William Simmons sets eyes on, even as late as now, suffers judgment after a process of comparison with those curls.

Then William thought Mattie was the most beautiful person in the world, although later, after his powers of discrimination had increased, he came to understand that she was not really beautiful. She might have been but her face, even the face of the small child, Mattie, was riven with the seams of pain; and her meager body was a knot of distortion. William Simmons remembers when Mattie ran and played with Harvey, her younger brother, and other children, and then remembers that something happened to her and she was out of his sight for a long, long time. Somebody told him . . . he thinks it was Harvey . . . that she would never be able to walk again, that something had happened to her back that would make her grow mature and old without growing in size. When William was a little boy he was proud to know

Mattie . . . proud to be her neighbor . . . for she was unique and therefore distinguished. It was like knowing a freak in a circus . . . knowing him personally . . . and William used to tell the story of Mattie as he knew it, and with necessary exaggerations so as to be in the lead, whenever there was a contest among his companions in telling of strange perversions of nature and wonderful things in the world.

Afterward he came to be more proud to know Mattie, but his pride was on other grounds. She was the bravest woman he ever knew. God had visited upon her the misery of life without the solace, and her body suffered the torture of a Prometheus, with the vultures of pain forever plucking at her vitals. And she blessed Him for it. She worshiped Him with a fervor which might have been the fervor born of fear of impending death, but which was more likely as true religion as Mary, the mother of Christ, owned in her suffering. Mattie never complained; she was always as cheerful as a little bird. Her bright, bird-like eyes gleamed with unhealth or the glory of Heaven. It may be that Mattie was so fervently religious and so exemplary in the practice of her religion because she was nearer to God and the Unknown than any one of those who could run around

and play on the playgrounds of the world, fight for the victory of the world and labor for its goal. She was always, it seemed, just an inch or two from the door that leads away, and children like William Simmons wondered whether it might not be that she could overhear some of the mystery tales they must have been telling on the yonder side.

Mattie loved Harvey as she loved nothing else in the world. Her love for him was as jealous as the love of an animal for its young. Mattie was never unhappy about herself; she was never seemingly unhappy about anything but Harvey. She cried over Harvey, because she wanted him to be strong and successful . . . since she was a weakling and a failure . . . and he gave no promise of ever being.

For Harvey was mild and sweet and weak . . . so obviously weak that strangers, passing from the station to the market vicinity of the city, pitied him as they saw him playing in the yard before the hotel door. Harvey wore the badge of weakness. He had no chin.

He was not an offensive child. His temper was sweet . . . too sweet, really. He was mild and yielding, and the biggest cry-baby Jackson ever saw. If any of his playmates would touch him ungently he would tune up and howl like

a dog stricken with sympathetic music. God knows he was not pretty! His nose was big and crooked; it had a clot at its maximum ordinate, and the nostrils were broad . . . they expanded and contracted like his breast when he breathed. His forehead was moderately high, and very broad, giving the impression of lowness. His head was large, and the greater expanse of it was behind and above his little, flat-lying ears. His eyes were fair blue in color and far apart, and the lids were red and veiny. His hair, eyelashes and eyebrows were light sandy in pigment, and his skin was thin enough to let the red blood-vessels beneath it make its color.

With a chin, Harvey would have been an unusual-looking, but not grossly abnormal, boy, with a somewhat strong and virile face; without a chin, he was a freak and a weakling.

Because William Simmons lived next door to Harvey, he was content to call Harvey his playmate during their early years. William rather relished his own superior strength, his dominance over Harvey. But later, when William was become more self-conscious and more aware of the wisdom of establishing himself with the majority by the assumption of contempt for anything and everything verging away from the ideal average . . . verging away in either direc-

tion . . . he was compelled to repudiate his friendship with Harvey—repudiate it in the sight of men—just as he was compelled to advertise his contempt for Mark Smith, who made the highest grades in the class at school, and just as he was compelled to prove himself disdainful of Egbert Turpin, whose father was the richest man in town. William had to do these things or himself be repudiated by the majority.

Eventually William found he had been unwise when he had disclaimed Harvey. But he had to do it; it was his duty to society, and justice to himself. William was a part of Jackson; Jackson is a part of the United States of America, which is a democratic nation: The rule of the majority must be, and will be, maintained.

CHAPTER II

I

ALTHOUGH Jackson was . . . and is now . . . an integral item in a very great democracy, every Jackson boy of Harvey Landrum's time was potentially a monstrous tyrant . . . every one but Harvey Landrum.

A boy is inevitably cruel to his inferior. In every instance Harvey was obviously the inferior. Somehow, a child who has come into that period of life marked by an inflamed self-awareness . . . a consciousness of self for the first time as a separate mind related to the minds of others only comparatively . . . fails in having that judicial bearing which the cradled infant apparently owns in its placid phases, and which mature persons, grown away from the sense of isolation and become social, do have in proportion to increasing age and the crushing power of environing life. Thus it is that a child will gaily call attention to the affliction of another, will mock a little cripple or make sport of cross eyes as though they were the pleasantest

things in the world. There were a "Crip," a "Four-eyes" and an "Egg Head" in Harvey's class.

And so it was that William Simmons called to public attention the obvious flaw in the design of Harvey Landrum . . . and it was William's ingenuity that devised the name "Snake-face," which followed Harvey to the end of his school career.

William was about twelve then, and Harvey was less than a year younger. William must have repeated words he had heard at home, for the Landrums and Simmonses were neighbors, and neighbors are topical of the greater portions of all dinner-table and fireside discourses. William's mother was an intensely loyal woman . . . so loyal, in fact, that she had no need to wait for the rising of any opportunity to demonstrate her loyalty . . . so loyal that she looked upon the children of her neighbors as pretentious but altogether hopeless rivals of her own children. How frequently William had heard her characterize another woman's son to his own advantage!

William and Harvey were in the fourth grade at school. William remembers, with good reason, the whole detail of a series of incidents of

that year, as if yesterday had been the day of the first of those incidents.

Harvey had been asked by the teacher to name the five great lakes. He had named Huron, Michigan, Erie and Ontario. The name of the fifth and greatest one had been refused him by his memory.

"Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, Lake Ontario—and—and—and Lake Huron." As he named the last, his voice plunged desperately into a high pitch.

"No. You named Lake Huron twice," she said gently. "What is the name of the biggest lake?"

"Lake—Lake Michigan," he faltered, and his thin, little voice was near to a sob.

"No, no!" The teacher was impatient.

"I don't know; I don't know," he cried, covering his face with his arms, breaking into a gust of weeping.

William Simmons was called upon to answer the question; he named all five of the lakes, confidently supplying the missing Superior, took his seat again and laughed at Harvey.

After that recitation had been ended and the pupils had gone back to their permanent desks, William scrawled on a piece of tablet paper:

"CRY-BABY HARVEY HASN'T GOT ANY CHIN. THAT'S WHAT MAKES HIM A CRY-BABY. WHOEVER HASN'T GOT ANY CHIN, IT'S A GOOD SIGN THEY HAVEN'T GOT ANY BACK-BONE EITHER. OLD HARVEY IS TOO WEAK TO HURT A FLY. I BET FANNIE CARTRIGHT COULD KNOCK HIM DOWN."

William read it over and laughed about it to himself. Then he started its circulation by writing on the top of the page: "PASS IT ON."

He handed it to the girl who had the desk in front of him. She was Fannie Cartright herself, to whom Harvey had brought a bunch of blue violets that morning, violets which he had picked the afternoon before with back-wearying tedium and labor. But he had not given Fannie the violets, for he had not been able to rouse the courage to make such an opening for teasing, and so he had sheepishly taken the flowers up to the little platform and placed them on the teacher's desk.

Fannie giggled as she read what William had written, and then she passed the paper forward. Almost the whole class had seen the composition before it came, at last, to Harvey. And its author was mightily pleased because of the sniggers and winks of the appreciators of it.

Then Harvey read it. And it seemed he could

not lift his eyes from it. William watched his face grow very red and then white, while Harvey still stared at the thing. Perhaps William felt a little pity for him, and yet he laughed and responded with a wink to the snigger sent him by Dutch Ewing, who had the desk across from Harvey's.

At length Harvey crumpled the paper in his hand and dropped it on the floor. Then he picked it up, smoothed it out again, folded it and put it in his pocket.

For some indefinable reason that action vaguely disturbed William.

II

For the next two years, Harvey Landrum was the weakling of the school.

He cried when he missed his lessons.

He was the butt of crude jokes on the playground, and he never played at games. He was accustomed to sit forlornly apart and watch the others. He was never urged to join their play.

William Simmons named him "Snake-face" one day while flaunting his own fearlessness before a crowd of smaller boys at Harvey's expense, and the name became a fixture.

William bullied him. Guy Ertle bullied him. Dutch Ewing bullied him. Everybody bullied

him with the exception of Egbert Turpin, who pitied him and wasted his company with him in the effort to befriend him.

Harvey so eagerly and gratefully accepted Egbert's charity that Egbert soon grew weary of him and began to avoid him. That left Harvey utterly lonely.

It is a stock point in woman's repartee that woman is what man makes of her. And that was true in the case of the girls of the school. Because the boys were contemptuous of Harvey Landrum, the girls despised him. Fannie Cartright despised him more directly than did any other, for she had the greatest reason to despise him: she had been teased about him.

III

When he was fourteen years of age, his mild voice began to change, and his slight frame began to increase. Like a dock-weed released from bramble, he shot up toweringly, and he expanded in girth proportionately. That year, too, he was done with whimpering and crying; and little boys who laughed at him and called him "Snake-face" at times when no larger boys were near, he struck with his fists or kicked, as was the more convenient; when the offending child was of such stature as to require his bend-

ing over a little to strike him, Harvey always used his foot: it was less effort, and quite as effective.

"And if you tell," he'd warn, "I'll come so near to killing you that you won't know the difference for about a week."

Egbert Turpin caught Harvey one day beating little Arthur Mosely . . . beating him unmercifully. Egbert stopped him by merely speaking his name.

"You ought to be ashamed," he said.

Harvey sucked in his lower lip and sulked.

"I've a good mind to tell your folks on you."

Harvey looked frightened.

"Please don't," he begged, "Don't tell Mattie, and I'll never do it again. I promise."

Egbert did not tell Mattie; he told William Simmons instead, and the next day William, posing as Arthur Mosely's defender perhaps, took occasion to slap Harvey's face before a little crowd, neglecting for some reason or other to tell him why he was administering the blow. That was probably a mistake.

At the age of fifteen, Harvey was the biggest boy in the class . . . the biggest boy in the school except Guy Ertle, who was two grades ahead of him. Moreover, Harvey's voice had gone without permanent injury through the painful bivocal process, and now had a consistency of

tone and volume equal to a pond of bullfrogs in a shower of rain. It was the most booming voice in the schoolhouse, and Harvey was beginning to use it in a heavy, peremptory manner, which prevailed invariably when he was answering questions in class.

Once Miss Alice Taliaferro, teacher of history, asked him:

"Who killed Alexander Hamilton?"

"Burr," he shot out, with such a voluminous and fearsome tone that Miss Alice looked frightened for an instant and pressed her pale hand to her breast.

The whole class laughed, and Harvey looked around with a horrible scowl.

IV

His character was altering startlingly. From a child as mild and timorous as a cowed dog, he had become an adolescent with the tones and inflections of a blusterer, the inclinations of a bully. He seemed to take a fine pleasure in beating smaller boys, a pleasure exceeded only by that which he seemed to win in telling them of his courage and his strength and his will to prove to the whole school . . . to the whole world . . . that he was far from that which they suspected him of being; that the brand he wore was a lie.

But the older boys and those near his own age still recognized him as a weakling and a coward. They knew—certainly not in any clear and expressible degree—that his new overbearing front and his increasing domineering amounted, after all, to sheer pretense . . . that he was trying to distract attention from the evident flaw.

Harvey's attitude then was quite similar to a pretense of William's own, except that Harvey was going directly to the point of proving that the lack of a chin was not . . . in his instance, at any rate . . . significant of weakness, while William was attempting to prove an assumed quality before a critical world in order to call all attention away from a fancied fault, which to his inflammable adolescent mind seemed potentially ruinous, dependent upon society's discovery of it.

William had been celebrated in the neighborhood as a pretty boy . . . his proud mother had curled his yellow hair persistently until he reached the age of ten . . . and now, with the prospect of maturity immediately before him, he still was fearful of the patent quality of his charm. Although he was not, probably, quite as pretty as he was conscious of being, he nevertheless took care to reassure himself of his impendent manliness . . . and made a valiant

campaign to convince the public of it . . . by offsetting his infamous beauty with profuse and frank profanity. William willfully established a reputation among his mates as the "cussin'est" boy in town.

And that is the way of an amorphous man, an unpurposeful boy, on the verge of becoming mature. He is like a wild bird which defends its young from a prying creature by fluttering about some empty nest as if all her precious possessions were in it there. He is like a dude with a hole in the seat of his trousers, who sits tight and uncomfortable throughout the tea party and backs out bowing after it is over . . . when he might have relieved his embarrassment and avoided draughts by merely requesting his obliging and tolerant hostess to sew it up. He is like a vain, ugly woman, who pads her deficiencies so that the world may never know her honest imperfections.

It is the nature of a becoming man to build a false self, to establish a new person upon his God-made framework, and to maintain the establishment so assiduously through maturity and middle age and senility . . . through all phases and environments to the grave, and maybe beyond . . . that the people of your world may never know the real you—only the you whom

you have varnished and veneered to fit false world-standards as artificial as your false self.

It is a point for long speculation, whether there is not somewhere a member of society . . . it matters not what fashion of society . . . who is his honest self, as nakedly true to the eyes of men as to the eyes of God!

It is not civilization alone that demands this outward pretense, this shell of a personality to cover and hide the soul, as a tortoise shell covers the whole carcass of the timorous reptile . . . man's mask to shield the dulled eyes until the truth cannot be seen! It is likely true that all society makes such demand: the savage has his mask and shell appropriate to his society . . . note the famously inscrutable face of the American Indian, his mode of concealing the truth within him.

Civilized persons must be more elaborate than the ingenuous Indian, for civilized society is more elaborate. Civilized individuals must establish new, opposite points of quality for men to mark as positive truths that the true character is false and the false true.

Dimly, his mates saw the mask Harvey Landrum was attempting to assume, and dimly they recognized the inadequacy of it.

They knew him too familiarly for what he

really was. They knew he would not dare to fight. He would bully little boys, but he would not expose himself to the likelihood of conflict with any one who might be expected to give him considerable resistance. They all knew that.

And so, they continued to abuse him playfully or spitefully, as the situation might arise; teasing him now about his militant bearing, and occasionally referring to the chin his negligent Maker had not awarded him. That was his sensitive point. When any one would speak of it, Harvey would redden first and then turn almost blue . . . like a litmus paper undergoing acid and alkali tests . . . and clench his hands and take a step or two forward aggressively. But he never would come to hard grips with his tormentor. Instead, he would look frightened, shake his head in a dazed and hopeless way, look down to the ground, turn his head away and step back. He seemed to want to fight, really; but he was apparently just unable to bring himself to it.

. . . . . .

There was a twenty minutes' recess every morning, beginning at 10:10 o'clock, and when the game was in season this period was filled with baseball. Teams stood organized, and the game

was invariably well begun a minute or two after the sounding of the recess bell. One May morning, a little while after they had started playing, Harvey Landrum walked aimlessly across the ball ground. Guy Ertle drove one out at that moment, and, judging that it was good for three bases if he should run as fast as he could, he set out pulling his great bulk toward first base. He rounded first and lumbered on; an instant before he would have reached second base, he crashed into Harvey. Then, forgetful of his aspiration to earn third, he stopped to reprimand the obstacle. He called Harvey a filthy name, and as Harvey attained his feet, after the sprawl that resulted from the collision, Guy drew his arm back as if to strike him. Harvey turned and ran. A little later, William Simmons found him in the basement of the school building, where pupils were accustomed to eat their luncheons on rainy days. Harvey was sitting in a corner, whimpering. It was the first time William had seen him crying since Harvey had wept his last tear over missed lessons.

"What are you crying about, Harvey?" William questioned, not wholly unsympathetic, nor yet quite as sympathetic as he was pretending to be.

"None of your damned business," Harvey replied, half whining, but trying hard to maintain his self-respect at William's expense.

William, whose aim was to show the wide world that beauty is only skin-deep, couldn't endure such back-talk from Harvey. He said:

"Well, you needn't be trying to get so rotten uppity about it, you chinless coward!"

Harvey's fists clenched hard, and his lips turned white.

He closed his eyes and shuddered and started in a headlong run toward the open door that led by a flight of steps to the playground. But he was in a corner, and William was in front of him. William was eager to hit him . . . to hit him crushingly . . . maybe because Harvey was inferior, maybe because he was offensive to William's eyes, maybe because to strike Harvey might aid William in his persistent campaign to refute the traditional significance of his somewhat effeminate beauty. Anyhow, William meant to keep Harvey lodged in that corner. As Harvey lunged to escape, William caught his swinging arm with one hand and hit him squarely in the nose with the firm fist of the other; that propelled Harvey back into the corner, and William struck him again on the side of the head before Harvey could turn around to face him.

Harvey tried a second time to escape, and again William drove him back.

William was hitting him as frequently as he was able, and Harvey was drawing himself farther and farther into the corner, and covering his face with his hands. His only effort seemed to be to protect himself.

William felt Harvey's nose squash under his fist, and saw a trickle of blood follow the groove down to his mouth. Harvey tasted it with a quizzical tongue. He spat.

"Blood!" he cried out in a broken, shattered, almost sobbing voice:

"Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!"

It was a tone of prayer.

There sounded loud laughter from the open space behind William. A dozen boys, some of them the smaller ones whom Harvey had bullied and beaten, were gathered there. Others were coming in. Doubtless, some one had spread the news that a fight was in progress, for the ball game had been abandoned, evidently; perhaps they had been there for a little while, but William had been so intent upon the attack and Harvey so concerned with salvation that they had not been aware of the assembly.

William, for one, was not displeased that they had come. He determined to give his best

possible demonstration of the vaunted manliness of men. He was a trifle arm-weary then, and so he rested, while holding an aggressive attitude.

Harvey's back was literally against the wall. He was looking around the basement with the air of an imprisoned thing which seeks escape.

"Hit him on the chin," piped little Arthur Mosely, and the rest of the watchers laughed.

William looked about in order to publish his appreciation of the jest, and, as he turned his head, Harvey took impulsive advantage. He struck his assailant with the most crushing power William had ever been so personally aware of.

William caught a glimpse of a streak of white light. His knees would not brace, and he collapsed to a crawling posture.

He made a groping effort to regain his foothold. Harvey stood for an instant staring as if puzzled; then, with a strange mouthing of jumbled words . . . he must have been a little hysterical . . . he flung himself atop the fallen boy. William had a fleeting look at Harvey's tense face, which was bloody all over. There might have been a murder then if Guy Ertle and some of the others had not lifted and pulled and jerked Harvey away.

As soon as he was on his feet, Harvey swung toward Guy. The attack was so sudden and so unexpected that Guy stood amazed. He struck Guy's great moonish face—once, twice, three times—with force and swiftness, until it was rounder with swollenness and red as sunset; and then Harvey scratched off streak after streak of skin with his long finger-nails. When Guy turned and ran out of the basement, Harvey made no attempt to follow but began a random attack on the person of anybody near him.

The little boys led the general exodus, and all the big boys followed in the mild stampede precipitated by these, who had already known the weight of Harvey's hand . . . all the big boys followed except William, Henry Wilson and George Graves. William was still a trifle groggy. Henry Wilson was too brave to run, and, besides, he was aware of the distinction one may earn by not following a crowd. George Graves had a sprained ankle.

Harvey set about to compose himself. He wiped the clotting blood from his face with an assumptiously careless hand, as if it were no more than ordinary perspiration.

He turned magnanimously to William Simmons.

"I hope I didn't hurt you. Was just waitin'

for you to get tired before I started fightin'."

"Waitin'! Hell!" commented Henry Wilson.

Harvey knocked him sprawling on the basement floor.

But before Harvey hit Henry Wilson, he clamped his teeth and then unclamped them and then clamped them again, clenched his fists and then unclenched them and then clenched them again, stepped forward aggressively and then stepped back in indecision and then stepped forward again . . . and then struck out with all his might.

V

As Harvey and William Simmons walked up the stairs together after the recess had ended, little Arthur Mosely came running up the steps behind them.

"Harvey! Oh, Harvey!" Arthur called in a loud whisper.

Harvey and William stopped and looked around.

"Guy Ertle told on you. I heard him tell Professor Martin that you started a big fight down in the basement and knocked him down with a baseball bat and scratched his face, and I heard Professor Martin say he was goin' to——"

"Git away from here, you lousy little tattle-tale," he cut off Arthur, and looked to William for approval of his speech.

"I hate a tattle-tale," William obliged.

Professor Martin's brow was ominous when the students clattered down into their seats and slowly grew quiet.

He rose up in his full dignity then, and after surveying his pupils from one side of the common hall to the other, announced in that dread voice, portentous of grief and woe:

"Harvey Landrum is wanted in my office at once!"

Harvey paled a little, rose from his seat unsteadily and walked slowly downstairs. The principal followed him. Silence endured for a moment in the auditorium; then came the sharp hissing of whispers.

Harvey was standing in the hallway before the open door of the principal's office. He seemed not to notice his mentor as he passed. Professor Martin opened the door wider, and held it open waiting for Harvey to enter. But Harvey stood sullenly by, and did not advance a step.

"Come in!" the principal commanded.

"I—I won't come in. If you've got anything

to say to me you can say it out here." His tone was faltering at first, and brazenly defiant at the last.

Professor Martin looked at him in astonishment for a minute.

"What's got into you?" he questioned then, "I never saw you like this before. I can't quite understand your starting a fight. What's the trouble?"

Harvey's reply was blustery. He twisted the corners of his mouth as he spoke:

"Didn't start the fight. I've always been peaceable because I didn't want to fight; didn't want to hurt any of 'em. But I've stood as much as I can stand, and from now on I'm going to knock hell out of anybody that gits funny with me. And I don't plan to let anybody interfere with me." His voice became a murmur: "Show 'em whether my chin makes me weak—let 'em know I'm stronger'n any of 'em . . . stronger in every way."

Professor Martin heard the murmur, and because he did not quite understand its meaning, he assumed a conciliatory bearing.

"Well, Harvey," he offered, "I think I understand the trouble. I won't punish you this time, but I warn you that I won't have insubordination from you." Then, with more firmness:

"And I won't have any more of your impudence. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," Harvey said meekly, and then remembering his new status and his aim to maintain it and prosper it even to the ends of wreckage and ruination, in order to prove to his community that the absence of a chin was not indicative of weakness, he amended under his breath: "Till next time I've got a good reason to be impudent."

During the history hour, which followed, Harvey reflected on how easy it all had been, from the first furious blow to his victory over Professor Martin. That night he went to bed with glory in his heart; indeed, it had been a wonderful day. None could doubt his courage now! Not even he.

VI

That was the end of free speech on the subject of Harvey Landrum's chin . . . or his paucity of chin . . . in his presence. But, from the day of the big fight in the school basement until he was graduated from High School in Jackson, there was no need to excite him to a martial state of mind.

He picked his own fights, and for a while he found plenty of them, but before a year was

done he had just about exhausted the fighting talent of the town . . . and had exhausted William Simmons once or twice on general principles.

In their senior year at High School, as William was about to leave the building for home one spring afternoon, Harvey caught his arm and ordered him to go with him back into the boys' lavatory. Harvey held the arm with such a tight hand that William could not have failed to obey without offending him and so precipitating a public fight. Accordingly, William went.

When they reached the lavatory, Harvey locked the door, and William knew for a fact that he was in trouble.

"What's the matter, Harvey?" he questioned, desirous of conciliating him, for he wanted no more fights with Harvey.

Harvey stood and looked at William, swinging his long, loose arms while he seemed to be making up his mind.

Having come to some determination, he straightened his back and threw out his chest in the arrogant expression his fellows had come to know as the bully's forewarning. Then he reached into the inside pocket of his coat and pulled out a folded piece of tablet paper, which appeared to be old and yellow and crumpled.

"I've had something to settle with you that I've been holding in my mind for about eight years," he began.

William was quiet for a moment; he was not sure of what might be the most fitting thing to say. He hedged for time:

"Harvey, I'll admit you can whip me . . . if that'll do you any good . . . and I'll admit I don't want to fight with you. If that won't satisfy you, I don't know what else I can do. I don't see any sense in your beating me just because you're man enough."

Harvey's blue eyes gleamed at that; he swelled up manfully. When he spoke his voice had a fresh quality of dominance.

"I'll give you something to do: do you see this?" He held out the piece of paper he had drawn from his pocket.

William looked at it curiously.

"Yes."

"Well, you've got to eat it. Got to eat it!" He was roaring. "Eat it: that's what you've got to do."

William was naturally puzzled.

"Eat it?" William queried, "You are talking like a crazy man."

Harvey twisted the corners of his flabby mouth:

"This is a literary composition of yours . . . something you wrote when we were in the fourth grade.

"Open it up and read it to me."

William opened it and immediately remembered it.

"You wrote it, didn't you?"

"Yes, I wrote it."

"Read it!"

William quailed.

"Read it aloud!" Harvey bellowed.

William read it aloud.

"Now, eat it!"

"You take me for a fool, or a goat?" William defied him for the moment, desperately wondering if any man had ever been so humiliated.

Harvey broke William's nose and forever ended his reputation for unmanly beauty before William ate his manuscript. But he did eat it, every scrap.

VII

There you have a fair idea of the growth and development of the man who married Eleanor Witherspoon.

Perhaps you don't know how he married her and why he married her. That can be told with much less difficulty than can the detail of the

other side of the mating . . . and, really, if this story were for the ladies of Jackson, and only them, it would be a very great trial to compose it; for who can know why she married him —unless she loved him?

CHAPTER III

I

THE day after the big fight in the school basement, Mrs. Landrum had said to Mrs. Simmons:

"I don't know what's got into Harvey. Mattie's a little worried about him . . . you know, she's just given her life to raisin' the boy. Well, when he got in from school yesterday, he went out in the back yard and took his seat on the woodpile. When that rain came up, he just kept sittin' there, gettin' drenched to the skin. I went to the back door and called to him. He didn't answer me. Mattie told me to tell him she said to come into the house. I told him.

" 'I won't,' " he says.

"Then I rolled Mattie's chair to the back door. She hollered to him, 'Harvey, honey; come in the house.'

" 'I won't,' he shouts back to her, so sulky-like that it provoked Mattie.

" 'All right, don't come in then; stay out

there and drown like a fool goslin',' she says to him.

"You know, when she said that, he stands up and smiles and says, 'I will come in the house, too; you can't keep me from it.' And in he comes.

"I don't know what to make of him."

II

That was the beginning of Mattie's problem in the management of Harvey. From that day he set himself contrary, and whatever he was told to do he would not. For a long time Mattie would not give in. She would tell him a dozen times to do a thing, and he would adamantly refuse a dozen times; but when, on occasion, she would turn and say, "All right then, don't," he would respond:

"I will; you can't keep me from it."

There were chores and errands about the hotel which must have been done, and so eventually Mattie and Mrs. Landrum had to yield to him. They had to tell him not to do things in order to get him to do them. It was all a play, Mattie knew. Harvey was quite aware that they really wanted him to fetch in wood and coal, cut the grass and perform general odd jobs . . . he knew perfectly well when Mattie forbade him to bring an armful of wood into the kitchen that

she really wanted him to do that very thing. But his pose was fixed, and he maintained it assiduously . . . except in one particular.

Whatever he could do for Mattie, personally, he did willingly, unsolicited. He was contrary about helping his work-worn mother, and about performing assignments in the interest of the hotel establishment, but he was always ready to roll Mattie's chair down the street to some neighbor's house when she wanted to go visiting, to bring her work-basket to her or to read to her. And when she would merely mention something she wanted done for her personal satisfaction, Harvey would smile in his weak, gentle manner and set about complying with the suggestion.

III

In the June of Harvey's graduation from High School, his mother conferred with Mattie, and together they came to the decision that he was not needed in the hotel that summer. Accordingly, Mrs. Landrum approached him on the day after the Commencement exercises:

"Harvey, I want you to get a job in the cotton mills this summer. I won't have any use for you here. You'd just be in the way. I'm going to

change Mr. Edwards from night clerk to day clerk, and Mattie and I will take care of the desk at night."

"I don't want to work in the mills," he said, "I won't work in the mills. Leave Mr. Edwards on the desk at night. I'm going to act as day clerk."

And Harvey did act as day clerk.

He spent his spare time that summer in reading. He read "Power of Will," "Mastership in Six Lessons," "How to Succeed," and "Men Who Have Risen." It does seem that any one who has power of will enough to read through such a library . . . to read each volume over and again . . . has power of will enough to win the wealth and glory of the world.

He sought the materials of the public library toward the end of the summer, and found there a translation of *"Die Welt als Willie und Vorstellung,"* by Arthur Schopenhauer, the general philosophies of which he applied to his own case. He was so pleased with the findings of the celebrated emotionalist that he sought further in his works and found there much to ratify himself.

Autumn came, and on a crisp day whose air was made to invigorate him, Harvey announced to Mattie that he was about to seek a place in the

world. He had made his mind up, and when Harvey Landrum made his mind up there was no human power to hinder him . . . so strong had his will become, and so ductile his imagination.

CHAPTER IV

I

OLD OLIVER WAKEFIELD had founded *The Jacksonian* in 1830, had been its editor and its reportorial staff and its business department. He had been an outspoken commentator on the political veerings of his community and his State, and duels had occasionally resulted from his shameless and fearless outspokenness. When he was an old man, after his eyes had lost their sharpness and his pistol hand its steadfastness, George Greer, militant advocate of the abolition of slavery . . . since he owned no slaves . . . shot him dead as old Oliver stood before the door of the newspaper office.

Oliver number two succeeded then to the proprietorship of *The Jacksonian,* and it prospered mightily under his direction. He was killed in battle in 1863, and the newspaper became the property of his widow in trust for Oliver the third, a two-year-old infant whom the father had never seen.

The Jacksonian, under hired managements of

various degrees of fervor for its proper conduct, lost its famous character for vehemence and boldness, and for a little more than twenty years thereafter lived an erratic life.

Then the third Oliver came into possession, and proceeded to direct the mind of *The Jacksonian* in accord with his own mind's perception of fitness.

He was a mild man, and *The Jacksonian* became a mild newspaper, establishing before long a name for sound, sane conservatism throughout the State. Some of the older folk, who held memory of the bold bearing of the original *Jacksonian,* were contemptuous of the quality of dilution which had come with the newest generation; but after a few years these adverse critics passed away, and the journal moved on in a smooth and unimpeded groove, taken for granted as *The Jacksonian* . . . newspapers eventually come to be named with just specific familiarity as you award the family instrument in isolating it as "the piano."

II

Harvey Landrum sat for a long time under a reddening maple tree in the court-house yard. His eyes were fixed in the direction of the *Jacksonian* building across the street. Three

times he rose from the bench upon which he sat, and made motions as if to start through the desultory traffic. Each time he sat down again. Then he resolutely stood and resolutely fought against his own disinclination, until his footbeats bore him to the threshold of the business office of *The Jacksonian.* He turned aside there, impulsively, and went into the drug store that possessed the adjacent floor. He had no mission there. He just didn't know where else to go; and when he found himself before the cigar counter, he bought a big, black cigar in order not to appear aimless. He bit off the end of the cigar, strolled over to the fixture that gave a blaze when you opened it, lighted the cigar and began to puff. He looked at himself in the mirror above the soda fountain. The cigar certainly added ferocity. He twisted it into the corner of his mouth and bit down on it, forcing it to point upward and sideward; he thought that made him tough-looking. In view of what he was about to do, he longed to look tough. And it gave him courage, did that cigar! Chewing the weed fiercely, he walked out of the drug store, turned into the advertising office of *The Jacksonian* and inquired in his heavy voice where the editor's office was.

A clerk showed him the stairway which led to the editorial floor. Harvey mounted the

steps steadily and came into the city room. The first person he saw was William Simmons . . . the same William who had been his neighbor, his school-mate, his tormentor and his victim. When Harvey caught sight of this old familiar, he jerked behind him the hand that had the cigar in it, as if to hide it; it was an instinctive movement, due to no fear of William's opinion of cigars as related to young men, due only to the fact that Mattie had drilled into his mind that to smoke was to do evil. It occurred to Harvey then that he had no fear of William Simmons . . . that he had whipped him time after time and could whip him again . . . so he put the cigar back into his mouth, walked up to the other, carefully blew smoke in his face and remarked:

"Didn't know you worked here."

"Yes, I started nearly a month ago."

"How you like it?"

"Fine."

"Where is the editor's office?"

Simmons jerked his head in the direction of a closed door in the back of the room.

"Back yonder."

"That door?" Harvey inquired.

"Yes, that's it."

Harvey set out in a straight line for the door. William wondered what he was about to do.

Harvey raised his hand to knock, then halted the closed fist in the air. Then he knocked heavily. The invitation to enter sounded. He entered.

Mr. Wakefield stood talking to the city editor, Ed. Price, who was just about to leave him. Harvey noted that Wakefield stood with his back bent as if he were talking confidentially, and that his voice was rather toneless and weak. He speculated on why he had that confidential attitude, since all he was saying was:

"I agree with you fully, Ed.; you go ahead and handle it as you see fit. You know more about those things than I do." He turned to Harvey.

"Howdy do, sir."

"Are you the editor?" Harvey questioned bluntly.

"Editor and publisher; name's Wakefield."

"Well, my name's Harvey Landrum."

Price, who had been standing agape, staring at Harvey, suddenly realized that his conference was done, and so he went out and shut the door.

Mr. Wakefield, with that same bend in the waist which had made Harvey think he was intruding on a very confidential conference, said to him:

"Have a seat, Mr. Landrum."

Harvey sat down after reaching the conclusion

that the air of confidence was merely a physical characteristic. Mr. Wakefield took a seat.

"What did you want to see me about?"

"Want a job as a reporter."

"I think you should see Mr. Price about that."

"Who's Mr. Price?" Harvey asked.

"The gentleman who was just in here; he's the city——"

"Well," Harvey interrupted, "you're the editor, ain't you?"

"Editor and publisher, but Mr. Price——"

"Well, I wanted to see you."

Mr. Wakefield was unaccustomed to dealing with applicants . . . certainly unaccustomed to dealing with such applicants as this one.

"Can you write a news story?" he queried uncertainly.

"Never tried it, but I know I can. I can do anything I try to do." Harvey took care to emphasize every word.

"Well, I guess we'll have to hire you . . . I don't know what Ed. will say . . . but you seem to have the right spirit . . . What'd you say your name is?"

"Harvey Landrum," Harvey growled, very much aware of the confidence the first success brings. "How much are you going to pay me?"

"Well, now; well, now; we'll have to see about

that. We'll have to see." He pressed a button, and after a moment Ed. Price came into the room.

"Mr. Price, I—we—er—we have hired this young gentleman as a reporter. How much do you suppose we could pay him to start?"

"Experienced?"

"No," answered Harvey, almost defiantly.

"I guess we can use him around the office, if he's willing to serve a sort of apprenticeship for a while. Couldn't pay him more than fifteen dollars a week to start."

Harvey nodded his head in acceptance, really somewhat pleased . . . for had not the man in "Men Who Have Risen" whom he accounted most like himself, had not he begun his career to fortune on the meager fare of four dollars a month—which he took home to his widowed mother, every penny?

III

Within a month, Harvey was taking his routine with the other reporters . . . there were only six others . . . and was doing about as well as any of them in so far as the getting of news may be taken into account. In addition, he had been more than usually quick to learn the fundamentals of the news story. Although he was

very apt in these phases of the work, he seemed not to be able to attain grammatical accuracy, and his spelling was "just about near enough to what it ought to be to make you know he really meant it, and just about far enough away to make you wonder whether any one could pronounce it as it was spelled," as Ed. Price remarked three months after Harvey had begun work for *The Jacksonian.*

The men who had to read Harvey's copy and correct it hated him that winter as only copy readers can hate slipshod reporters. Every day, either Lee Murchison, the smart-alecky little fellow who admitted he would have made a good President if he had only been President; George Abel, or John Roth . . . while John was working there . . . would inevitably complain to Price that he wouldn't put up with that damned chinless fat-head any longer, and every day Price would placate him with some such reply as:

"Rest easy; you're almost earning your salary now. If all reporters were as perfect as you seem to think they ought to be, you wouldn't have a job."

If some complaint of Harvey's work had come from old George Mahan, chief of the copy desk, who had served *The Jacksonian* in that capacity and as make-up editor for about forty years,

Price would have paid more heed. But Mahan never offered a word of complaint.

IV

There were three typewriters in the office of *The Jacksonian.* They were apportioned out to the three men in the office who could use them. The rest of the staff wrote their copy in long hand, and among the rest was Harvey, whose loose, unsteady and immature scrawl came, before the winter was done, to be the most obnoxiously familiar sight in the office to the men at the copy desk.

Harvey's fear when he had come into the office of *The Jacksonian* had been that the reputed significance of his absent chin might preestablish a reputation for him . . . that before he might have any opportunity to prove in some direct and emphatic manner that the deficiency did not in his case imply lack of fiber, there might be an opinion settled upon him by men who filled positions above him and around him. Although he had heard no man in the office mention his physical appearance, he was so painfully sensitive of his chinlessness that he occasionally caught himself suspecting that men who were talking together in low voices were discussing it . . . and whenever he turned suddenly and

saw old Wakefield speaking to any one in the office—Ed. Price or a reporter—the immediate significance of that bending, confidential air was that Harvey was the subject of his phrases. He invariably knew a minute afterward that this particular imputation of his was most probably groundless.

He never turned to find one of his associates sniggering or laughing quietly, without rushing away into the suspicion that the expression of amusement had had its beginning in a discussion of or a remark about his featural deficiency and its connotation of weakness. More than once during these first three months he found himself about to resent openly the mild laughter . . . resent it with his heavy fists and his bullying voice . . . but his better judgment each time checked him as he considered that, after all, perhaps the laughter might be utterly unrelated to himself.

And yet, the whole situation disturbed him, mainly because almost three months had passed and he had had no chance to prove to them in any emphatic way that he was strong . . . that his lacking chin directly belied his true character. Ed. Price, he believed, had been duly impressed by the manful way in which he had reported his stories to him. He had made a point of "talk-

up" to the city editor: everything he had to say to him he said blusteringly and in his most peremptory and succinct accents. He was confident that had had its effect upon the city editor's consideration of him, and perhaps it had; Price was quite as courteous to him as to any other member of the staff, and his attitude, generally, offered no justification for any charge of discrimination from any quarter.

The motive power behind the ambition of Harvey Landrum was not determination to make money for money's own sake, nor to earn prestige in the name of fame; even less was it to do good works for the sake of works well done; it was none of these. His chief and only aim was to succeed in a positive and clear-cut fashion . . . to succeed in order to prove, to a world that is quick and harsh to judge, that the state of chinlessness —in the case of Harvey Landrum, at any rate— was not significant of weakness. Because his appearance connoted weakness, he could not bear the thought of being accounted weak, and so the whole effort of his life and being was hurled with all the concentration of purpose of a great machine into the task of setting forth before his world the evidence of power. He did not care to prove his strength to himself; that which he held in his own mind was of no consequence, of

no importance. What difference would it make what he should think of himself? Not a jot. If he could make the world believe . . . with a belief approximating knowledge . . . that Harvey Landrum was a powerful man, a dominant mind —then Harvey Landrum would be a dominant mind and a powerful man, wouldn't he?

IV

Something, of course, had to be done to notify the men in the office that Harvey Landrum was far away from being a weakling. And so, he made up his mind to let them know.

The newest typewriter had been granted Joe Vardon. In preparation for its coming, young Vardon had taken a course in the local business college: therefore, the typewriter was due him by right of every law in the code of the office government.

Harvey Landrum decided one day in November that he wanted that typewriter, that he would have it; accordingly, on the following morning, he came to the office a little earlier than usual and took his seat before the desk upon which sat the new machine.

When Joe arrived to begin his morning's work, Harvey refused to give up his place.

Vardon was quiet and uncomplaining for a

while. He had nothing to write immediately, and after a half hour the city editor sent him out on an assignment. He came back at about ten o'clock. Harvey was still sitting at the desk on which the new typewriter squatted. Joe put his hand on Harvey's shoulder.

"Will you let me get there for a minute? I've got a couple of stickfuls to write."

Harvey didn't answer. He didn't budge.

Joe's voice was louder:

"I said I wanted to sit down there and write a little story. Will you get up?"

Harvey looked up and grinned.

"I've decided that this is my typewriter," he said, "and when I decide anything is mine, it's mine."

Joe mistook the grin for the signature of pleasantry.

"Tryin' to kid me or somethin'?"

"No. I mean to tell you that I've taken this typewriter."

"You have like Hell! What's the matter, you gone crazy?"

Four or five members of the staff . . . all there were in the office . . . were looking on interestedly. Price was in conference in Wakefield's office.

"No. I ain't crazy. I just got tired of

writin' with a pencil. S'pose you try it a while."

Vardon stepped back and scratched his head.

"Well," he offered at length, "I don't know what to make of it. But I guess the story can wait a minute. I don't know what the idea is, but we'll settle this as quickly as we can. You come out back of the building with me, and when I come back I'll either sit down in that chair and write my story there, or I'll sit over yonder and write it with a pencil."

"That's fair," Harvey submitted; but Lee Murchison, who was nearest them, noticed that Harvey opened his mouth twice to speak before the words came out in sound.

The two men started down, and Lee followed close behind them. After they had gone out the door, the other men in the office and the two office boys traipsed down the stairs to watch the battle which they hoped would come to pass. When the meager procession of spectators came to a halt in the vacant space just behind the building, Joe and Harvey had already shed their coats, and Lee Murchison was in the attitude of a referee, as cocky as a bantam rooster which stands off arrogantly watching Cochins battle.

"Time," said Lee.

Joe rushed. Harvey stepped back instinctively, and kicked out his foot. It struck the

other on the shin bone, stopping the aggression momentarily. Joe limped about in a vagarious circle. Then he rushed again; they clinched; Lee Murchison stepped between them to break them.

Lee has set up the claim ever since that he saved Joe's life by getting in the path of Harvey's driving fist at the instant of the breakaway.

The spectators helped Harvey in carrying both of them upstairs.

Price had returned from the conference and was sitting at his desk, wondering what had become of his staff, when the strange procession entered. He rose and stood at the edge of his little platform looking at the half dozen members of his force bearing in two limp bodies. He turned to Jimmie, one of the copy boys, who had just come in:

"What the devil is this?"

Then he went down to meet the procession and see for himself.

Price saw specifically what it was, and his face was blank with amazement.

"What's happened, trolley car collision?" he inquired, addressing Harvey.

"No," Harvey answered pleasantly, "Joe Vardon and I had a contest for the new typewriter. Lee Murchison was the referee."

"Oh!" he responded, and turned around to go back to his desk.

Harvey went at once to his new-won typewriter and took his seat there while other members of the staff were engaged in reclaiming Vardon and Murchison.

He took off the cover and looked at the machine in astonishment for a moment . . . like a little wide-eyed boy who finds for the first time a flaw in his new toy engine.

It had not occurred to Harvey before, that he did not know how to write on the typewriter.

VI

Harvey's standing with the executives of *The Jacksonian* prospered as the winter moved along. He was proving himself to be a news getter of high rank, and in every instance that arose where impudence or sheer boldness or hard digging and persistent effort were required, he was the man for the assignment. Such a reporter is valuable to a newspaper . . . indispensable to a newspaper, if such a one is on its staff.

Once . . . toward the coming of spring . . . Harvey was denied the detail of a police case by the police sergeant at the station house, whereupon his language became so abusive that the officer slapped his face. Harvey grappled with

him, threw him to the floor and kicked him in the stomach.

Three days in jail did not humiliate him in the least. He seemed to account his imprisonment a victory, after a fashion. Behind the bars, his voice became even more bullying than it had been. When the turnkey brought him his meals Harvey roared at him as the toothless lion in the circus cage roars at his fearless trainer. Old Wakefield sent William Simmons down to see him.

"What are you doing down here?" Harvey greeted him with gruffness.

"Sent down from the office to ask how you're gettin' along."

"What is it to them, how I'm gettin' along? I'm able to take care of myself.

"What're they sayin' at the office?"

"Said you might 'a' known you'd get into trouble for assaultin' a policeman."

"I'm not afraid of 'em. A policeman's just a man, ain't he? Well, I'm not afraid of any man living, officer or no officer. You tell 'em that when you go out, will you!" The last was an order, not a request.

Late in August . . . he had been in the employ of *The Jacksonian* for nearly a year . . . there came a new copy reader, a transient person

on his way from Texas to the East, who was working by stages. He was a smartish middle-aged man, who talked sharply and confidently, sprinkling his phrases with near-profanity and the latest slang expressions. From the prideful manner in which he mouthed terse slang, one not familiar with the expletives might have thought he had evolved them. Altogether, he was the sort of smart-aleck Southerners abominate, and his unpopularity in *The Jacksonian* office was immediate. But he was a good copy reader.

He did not like the appearance of Harvey Landrum from the first day of his presence. No more did he like Harvey's copy. As he sat at work, his inevitable monologue day after day was complainant of the execrable spelling of Harvey. One day he advanced on the city editor with a page of Harvey's copy.

"Mr. Price," he began, smirkingly, "if you were an educated man, how would you spell 'console'?"

"C-O-N-S-O-L-E," Price complied, not very graciously.

"But one of your brilliant staff members has conceived the idea of spelling it, 'C-O-N-S-O-U-L.' What shall we do about that? Which way do you think we'd better spell it?"

"Who is the original young man?" the city editor queried, laughing.

"This snake-faced fellow . . . Landrum, I think his——"

Harvey had come up while the copy reader was talking, and had taken his seat on a desk behind the humorist.

The reason the sentence was not finished was because Harvey's long, strong fingers cut it off in the windpipe. He shook the fellow until it seemed he might unjoint him. Then he let him go.

"I don't want to see you around the office tomorrow," he said. "You're fired. Do you hear me: you're fired." Then, in a heavy, ominous, rumbling tone: "Mr. Price, I'm taking the authority to fire this man. You're not giving it to me; understand?"

Price stood there with his mouth open.

Old Wakefield had bobbed up in his doorway just as Harvey had turned to Price. He had leaned forward as if he were listening eagerly, fearful that he might miss a word of Harvey's bellowing intonations. He had retreated into his sanctum and shut the door before the end of the scene in the city room.

Harvey's was a high-handed bearing, and it is difficult to believe that strong men submitted to

it; and yet it is true that they did. Perhaps they were not strong; perhaps they feared him; perhaps he astonished and shocked them into yielding; perhaps his tone of authority was too intense to be resisted by any man whose will was less vigorous than Harvey's pretense of force.

VII

Harvey notified the city editor early in September that he was going to give up his place on the staff of *The Jacksonian* before the end of the month.

"What are you going to do?" Price asked him.

"Get an education. I don't plan to be a two-by-four reporter all my life. I could probably be city editor here in five or six months if I stayed, but what the devil would I be after I got to be that?"

Price laughed.

"Where do you intend to go to school?"

"Nashville, if I can get enough money. If I can't, then I guess I'll have to go to Knoxville."

That afternoon Harvey invaded the sanctum of old Wakefield to try to borrow enough money to go to Nashville. He had saved almost nothing of his little salary.

"You say you want a thousand dollars?"

Wakefield questioned. "What security have you to offer?"

Harvey had an opportunity for vaunting himself, and so he answered with a manly air:

"I have my character, sir; my purpose to succeed and my ability to fulfill that purpose."

He paused a moment for dramatic effect. Then:

"If you want any more security than that, you can't get it."

Mr. Wakefield was a trifle disturbed. It was without doubt an unusual way of soliciting a loan.

"I don't know; I don't know," he said over and over to himself, and he rose from his chair and began to walk the floor in contemplation, bending over as if the weight of a man's life was burdening his back.

"I guess I'll have to let you have it," he acceded after a while. "You've shown ability and honesty, and I reckon I ought to help you get an education.

"But I never made a loan like this before. I never did. No; it's certainly unusual."

"All right," said Harvey, "when can I get the money?"

"I guess it will be time enough a few days before you get ready to go away."

Harvey was standing now, and old Wakefield was near him, leaning over as if he were about to tell him something in an undertone. Suddenly he said:

"Wouldn't five hundred dollars do you just as well?"

Harvey thought in the honesty of his mind that perhaps five hundred dollars would do just as well. But he wanted a thousand. He caught himself in a moment of indecision . . . and the inspirational works he had read did not countenance indecision; it was listed as one of the cornerstones of failure. He immediately checked his wavering mind by tensing his body and striking the palm of a hand with the fist of the other.

"No!" he roared. "How in God's name could five hundred dollars do as well as a thousand? Tell me that, will you!"

"I guess it won't," Wakefield submitted. "No, I guess it wouldn't do as well."

But Wakefield didn't want to lend Harvey Landrum a thousand dollars without security of some tangible sort. He did not want to lend him a penny, but he had said he would. He tried for three days to work out some scheme by which he might relieve himself of the promise he had made. And then, three days after Harvey

had approached him regarding the loan, he summoned Harvey into his office.

He was not confidential as he sat there in front of Harvey. He was very formal. He was about to be business-like. He was bent on being business-like.

"Mr. Landrum," he began, "I think it would be very unwise for you to go to Nashville to school, if you want my opinion on it."

"Yes?" questioned Harvey insolently.

"I mean by that that the Baptist college here in Jackson is as good as any of them. I know Dr. Fox, the president, very well, and he is a very able man . . . and a fine Christian influence. Why don't you stay here and work for *The Jacksonian* this year; work, I mean, during the hours you won't need for your studies. You can earn your way through school by doing that. That's my advice."

Harvey sat and contemplated on something he had had in his mind for a year. If he were to go away to Nashville he would probably want to take all the thousand dollars with him; if he were to stay in Jackson he would be earning most of his required money . . . perhaps all of it.

"All right, Mr. Wakefield; I think your advice is good. I'll stay if you raise my salary ten dollars a week."

It was Mr. Wakefield's turn to sit and think.

"I'll raise it five," he offered at length.

"Ten!" Harvey bellowed, like a bidder far in the back of a great auction sale crowd.

"Ten," Mr. Wakefield repeated before he knew he had said it.

"Thank you," said Harvey and got up and walked out.

The Baptist college was to open on the last Wednesday in September. On the last Monday in September, Harvey knocked at Mr. Wakefield's office door. He was invited in. He took a seat facing his employer.

"Well, Landrum; are you all ready to start to school?"

"I will be as soon as I get the thousand dollars you said you'd lend me."

Mr. Wakefield rocked back in his chair, astonished.

"Why, Mr. Landrum, I thought you wouldn't need that since you are going to continue working here . . . with a ten dollar raise. That was why——"

"So you thought that, did you?" Harvey cut in. "Well, I will need it. How did you expect me to pay my fees and get my books? The reason I agreed to stay was because I was keep-

ing my job and getting the thousand dollars besides. If I had gone to Nashville I'd have got a job. I want the money. You promised it."

"Can't understand it. Never did anything like this before. Very strong-minded young man," Wakefield muttered.

He opened a drawer for his check book.

. . . . . .

Harvey spent three hundred dollars of his thousand at once. There was a brace Mattie had heard a neighbor speak of, and she was desperately hopeful.

VIII

The fact that all the courses of study Harvey undertook that first year . . . mathematics, literature, Latin, German and biology . . . were mixed and mingled and twisted and entwined with religious dogma, was no great hardship for Harvey to endure. He assiduously learned his lessons from his texts, and entirely discounted the personal element. So great had grown his defensive attitude that he could not ever afford to make a concession to a person.

But his year moved smoothly on, and when another school session began in the September of another year, Harvey was inclined to continue

his studies at the Baptist college, and accordingly his arrangement with *The Jacksonian* prevailed through a second winter.

That year, because of conflicting hours between his studies and his newspaper work, Harvey was compelled to take a course in Christian Fundamentals, the faculty for which the college had its highest pride.

He really did not want Christian Fundamentals. He could not see that he would ever have any use for it. Points of religion had never affected his thought one way or the other. When he had been a boy . . . after he had grown old enough to absorb teachings . . . he had avoided Sunday School as a beast avoids fire, mainly because he had a vague consciousness of Sunday School's reputation as an institution where nice little boys went, in order to be complimented once a week for being nice; Harvey had no desire to be accounted nice, for, he felt, the nice must be weak whether or not the weak are invariably nice.

But because of the lack of another course at an hour when he should have taken a subject, he found it necessary to go into the Christian Fundamentals class.

The New Testament was, naturally, the basis of the text.

Harvey had never read the New Testament with very great interest. He had read parts of it aloud to Mattie many times, but Mattie preferred to hear the high-sounding portions of it; and, anyhow, it was as a sort of duty that he read to her, and so he read mechanically and listlessly as though he was performing some detached duty in a factory, making some part of a machine the function of which he did not know and did not need to know. Then, he had heard portions of the New Testament read every day at High School chapel services, but he had never paid any heed to the droning voice of the reader. The beginning of the chapel service had invariably been a signal for him to begin thinking of more interesting things or of nothing at all. Somehow, he knew instinctively that to be really interested in the Bible was to be like a girl . . . except some of the virile, battle-filled pages of the Old Testament. He had thought when he was a boy that he owned too much self-respect to read the Bible.

When he was a very little boy . . . before Mattie was old enough to read to him . . . his mother had read them Bible stories from the Old Testament; but scarcely any of these had remained with Harvey. Once, after he had become almost a grown man, he had returned to

the David and Goliath story, since he had a vague memory of it. After re-reading it, he had commented:

"Lucky shot. I'd rather have been Goliath a hundred times." Then, after pondering a moment: "He must have been a fine-looking fellow, strutting up and down before the armies of the Israelites. I sort of wish David had 'a' missed him."

Through the period of his growth and development, Harvey's inclination consequent upon his aim to establish the calumny of his weak chin's popular connotation . . . in his particular case, at any rate . . . had been to resist, resist, resist. He created in his own character the impulse to resist every outward movement that even vaguely suggested aggression against him. He was like the porcupine, whose quills are out in defense of his inwardness at every threat of attack . . . and every advance in his direction amounts in his little quill-point of a mind to a threatened attack.

There is many a person in the round world, far less self-conscious of deficiency than Harvey Landrum ever was, who proves a doubtful measure of strength by a seemingly natural tendency to assert the contrary. Perhaps there is a perverse nature which motivates the contrary bearing of many a man or woman . . . an inherent

perverseness that is intended, no doubt, to balance in some inadequate amount the vast universe of echoes which weighs down heavily upon the tolerant back of reasonable man. This must be granted that fairness may prevail. But Harvey Landrum's nature was not perverse. Resistance was a hard necessity for him.

Harvey saw an opportunity in denial of the thoughts offered him in Christian Fundamentals to prove again, and in a new way, that he was strong and self-assertive, that he was not one to be easily influenced by what others said and believed . . . or to be influenced at all by mass opinion. Here it occurred to him for the first time that to stand apart from the mass, to hold firm with the minority . . . to be the minority, if possible . . . was fine evidence of strength. He was no skeptic, certainly: skepticism might be evidence of mental independence, but it was insufficient evidence for Harvey Landrum. He needed and sought the most visible evidence and the most ringing testimony of strength that life might offer him, for his whole end in life was to flaunt power, in order to disprove and belie and utterly set at nought the badge of deficiency a merciless God had bestowed upon him.

Thus, it may be understood how Harvey stood tense and poised, waiting for every opening to

attack. Whenever Dr. Cowan, the minister who directed the thought of the class in Christian Fundamentals, offered any idea which might be questioned, it was questioned; and Harvey Landrum was the questioner. All others in the class gulped down the words of Dr. Cowan as the angels must gulp nectar. There was no problem of reason or unreason as they saw it; it was whether Dr. Cowan said this or, on the other hand, said that. There is no doubt at all that those earnest youths, had their mentor told them in the lecture's course that Judas Iscariot had great ears like a jack rabbit's, would have looked at one another as if to say, "Whoever would have guessed it?" and then turned busily to write it down in their voluminous notebooks.

Harvey stood apart in the class as the dissenter, and apart from the class as the heretic. Before two months had passed, it had begun to be talked around the college wind-lanes that Harvey Landrum was an outspoken and shameless atheist, that he denied his God and denied his Christ . . . and it was true, in so far as it can be true that any man may be an honest atheist. Perhaps it can be true; yet, some men say that those positive faiths which strong men find so hard to attain are utterly unattainable in a negative way—that it is near to impossible to believe

with a belief approximating knowledge . . . apart from knowledge; really, beyond all knowledge . . . that the popular God, or any omnipotent god, does live; but it is in all measure impossible to know, on meagerer fundamentals than the positivists have builded, that there is no God.

Harvey Landrum had set out to say with his loud voice that he knew that no God lived . . . that to suspect the presence of one was absurd and childish and weakly acquiescent to a fictitious tradition established by ambitious cliques.

And he said as much as that . . . and more than that . . . in class, out of class, arguing with the professor, arguing with the serious-eyed students who had set forth to prepare themselves for the clergy with the anticipation of no such experience as Harvey Landrum's antagonisms and denials offered them daily.

Dr. Cowan should have had Harvey brought before the president of the college and expelled from school . . . for he should have been expelled. But Dr. Cowan had spent long years as a minister in active service, and he knew how invaluable to a preacher is an acquaintanceship with an atheist or two. He knew that a very large part of the equipment of a pulpit orator may consist of no more than a personal friend-

ship with a garrulous atheist and a set of flexible analogies . . . for example, such an analogy as Dr. Cowan's own old stand-by, the locomotive engine, which may represent either the headlong progress of militant Christianity, the career along the strait and narrow path to the fixed and proper destination, the reckless speed of the evil man who plunges down into the river of perdition; leadership, coördination, or just any parallel which might be useful. Analogies were easy to find; Harvey served as the atheist. Therefore, since he was a portion of the equipment, Harvey was allowed to stay in the class.

Besides, it would have seemed somewhat un-Christian to cast him out while there was still left the chance to claim him for the army of the Lord. Many members of the class believed that Harvey would yet come to see the light, and many a one tried to claim for his own crown the star which must come to Harvey's converter.

Conscious of the attention he was calling to himself by his posture of disbelief, Harvey perpetuated it and increased its intensity.

He started in to read all the atheistic documents he could find; and, to establish ground for discussion, all the philosophical works he could discover in the public library. He made no distinctions . . . Plato and Hegel and Kant and

Freud were all the same to him, and if one contradicted the other he stored the opposed theories away in his mind to hold them until an opportunity might be offered to employ the more convenient of them. Many of them were pop-up ideas of unscholarly men, popular philosophers in search of likely vogues, but Harvey read them all as he came to them, remembered a jot here and a jot there, memorized some of the sharp sayings of Nietzsche and some of the explosive paragraphs of Schopenhauer, until . . . before the second winter of his college stint was done . . . he accounted himself a fit adversary for any querimonious churchman. Whatever occurred to him and seemed plausible, he added to his stock, and by the beginning of his second year he had developed and matured a very flexible and malleable treatise of jumbled philosophy, opinion, invention, bombast and bellow which was calculated to rout from his intrenchment the most assured mystic in the service of militant doctrinism.

For creeds were the especial quarter of Harvey's attacks, and his points against creeds were frequently so sound and so emphatically expressed that they were not to be answered by men not capable of answering them, and few or none of his school-fellows were so capable.

Generally, Harvey could speak so authoritatively . . . or, rather, with such a convincing assumption of authority . . . that his opponents in discussion would find the need to fall back upon the Bible as the only fundamental of thought, and upon the established phrases of doctrine, by which poor-minded men are won to the church, as first accessory to the basic establishment.

It follows that Harvey Landrum was a figure of prominence in the Baptist college, for he stood there as the only obstructing lug in the great cog-wheel mechanism of a church machine. He was sought out during all his free hours, in the evenings and in the early mornings, by amorphous preachers who wanted to practice preaching, and he welcomed them on his own account and challenged them to save his soul by merely proving that he had the sort of soul that had ultimate home in the rich heaven they depended upon. And they tried fervently. They engaged him in argument between classes, as he was going from one lecture hall to another; they visited him in his room at the hotel. Nor was his booming voice ever faltering in taking the offensive and hammering down upon the points which proved his strength, in a manner which proved his strength.

IX

Harvey was very eager to declare himself . . . so eager that he composed a sonnet, which he entitled, "Treason and Heresy" and submitted to the college magazine for publication in its February number:

I cannot cry "Hosanna!" to the Lord.
Nor even mouth a loud, ecstatic "Glory!"
In smug anticipation of reward,
As advertised in John's recondite story.
When my unpenitential life is ended,
Let my soul whip into the clean, clean dark,
Shot forth like some keen meteor unintended,
Flung into Spacelessness without a mark.
I will not stagnate in that famous Heaven:
Somehow, I do not want my Future static,
Dully provincial, devoid of leaven,
Sweetly monotonous, or democratic.

Yet: it is treason not to be a minion,
And heresy to flout the mass opinion.

For some reason or other, the sonnet was not published.

X

Of course his challenges reached the ears of the president of the college, who spoke of the

situation to Dr. Cowan; but Dr. Cowan interceded for Harvey . . . not for Harvey's own sake, maybe, but rather as a means of serving the ends of Christianity. He explained to Dr. Fox:

"You see, sir, it is to the advantage of our young men to have the opportunity to refute him. The argument of the atheist can never stand before the Christian, and it is good for them to see it as it falls. Besides . . . and this is between us . . . Landrum is such an ugly, unprepossessing fellow that he is a good one to point to as a horrible example: many a doubter would hasten to profess after one glance at our promising young atheist. And then, there is the hope we hold of pointing him to the light."

"I see your point," the president said.

XI

Harvey had carried his philosophies and opinions into *The Jacksonian* office, and by springtime had succeeded in so impressing William Simmons, Joe Vardon and Elton Boyd, three young men who were finding worldly wisdom as newspaper reporters, that they had become his disciples and had begun to quote his mouthings on religion and various subjects whenever and wherever they had occasion.

"He's got the finest mind I've ever known," young Boyd said to Eleanor Witherspoon one late afternoon in early summer. Miss Witherspoon had come to the Country Club with the three reporters and was sitting with them on the steps of the clubhouse.

"And he is unquestionably the strongest character I have ever known . . . and isn't afraid to fight the devil—" Simmons began.

"And yet, is fighting for him like Hell!" Joe Vardon interposed facetiously.

Miss Witherspoon laughed.

"He must be tremendously interesting. I'd like so much to meet him."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't!" Joe denied quickly, "He despises women. I heard him say just yesterday that the only courtesy he could ever offer a woman would be in pity for her inferiority."

There was a moment of quiet. Then she rejoined:

"My gracious mercy! Surely, he must be talking to hear his own voice. Is he a Southern man?"

"Yes. He was born right here in Jackson . . . you know where the Landrum House is?"

"Down near the L. & C. Depot?"

"I used to think he talked for his own ears," Simmons went on, "but I've come to realize that

Harvey believes just about everything he stands for. Don't you think so, Joe?"

"Well, he certainly stands for everything he says he believes, anyhow."

"How old is the man?" Eleanor asked.

"He must be about twenty-five," Joe Vardon hazarded, "That's just a guess; you couldn't tell his age by his looks."

"He's twenty-two," William Simmons corrected, "I was brought up with him."

Elton Boyd put in:

"By the way, before I left the office this afternoon, Price showed me a letter old Wakefield had turned over to him; it was about Harvey."

"Somebody else want him fired?"

"Yes. This time it's Dr. Fox, president of the college. He says he doesn't want *The Jacksonian* to come to the college campus until Harvey's discharged. He canceled all the subscriptions of his professors, immediately, without their consent."

"But I don't see that," Simmons rejoined. "Harvey doesn't write anything but news, and he writes that just as it is, without putting any of his opinions into it. I don't see——"

"Anyhow, it's clear that Dr. Fox is trying to use subscriptions to black-jack Harvey out of his job. Said he was an instrument of the devil, or

something like that, and that any newspaper that'd let him earn his bread, by working for it, was serving the devil's ends."

"Well, I'll tell you what I think," Eleanor said, "I think if Dr. Fox wants him to starve, then he's no better than Harvey Landrum is. I think he's worse."

"Are they going to fire him? You know, Dr. Fox and old Wakefield are good friends." Simmons was the questioner.

"I don't know. But I wonder what the trouble was at school."

"I guess he's been kicked out. He's been getting by, by the skin of his teeth all year. I don't see why they haven't kicked him out long before this."

"What has he been doing that's so terrible?" Eleanor inquired.

"He doesn't believe in God."

"Not really?" Eleanor countered. "He must be playing a joke of some sort on the churchy people at the college."

"It's no joke," Simmons assured her. "He's got proof. I'll bet he could convince you that there's no God."

"I'd like to see him try to convince me of anything . . . especially that!" Eleanor returned with spirit.

CHAPTER V

I

THERE was one person whom Harvey respected to the point of fear . . . Mattie. He loved her, but he had an undeniable and irrepressible feeling that she saw through his whole guard of pretense. And for that reason, he avoided her.

It was because of his fear that he exchanged his room, which was a part of the family quarters, for a similar room on the same floor but on the other side of the hotel. Mattie heard his huge voice one night while Harvey was entertaining a visitor in his old room, which was separated from hers by a wall. She heard him say:

"The whole Bible's nothing but an allegory; the meaning of 'Adam' is 'beginning'; the story of Eve is the story of Pandora; the same fiction runs through the Chaldean——"

"Harvey Landrum, shut up that nonsense," Mattie shrilled, and Harvey lowered his voice. He soon changed the subject.

After he moved his room he spoke his mind

more freely, for he had chosen the location of it so that Mattie could not hear him even if her door was open. Then, his visitors became more numerous and more frequent in their visitings.

His new room was a spacious square, the walls of which he had decorated with pictures . . . mostly prints . . . of prize fighters in action and storms at sea and battle episodes. He was proud of these pictures . . . proud of his colorful prints of 'Kid' McCoy and Battling Nelson and Tom Sharkey, proud of his garish and unreal representation of the Battle of Gettysburg, proud of a lurid seascape on shiny paper and proud of another like it which showed a pirate ship on its way to the lowlands. But the picture of which he was proudest was a portrait in oil, stiff and lifeless with eyes that glared. It was of a young man. Harvey informed each visitor that it was his father, who had been a weakling and a failure, and who had gone away from home a few months before Harvey's birth and had never returned nor communicated with Mrs. Landrum. Harvey would spare no detail of his father's delinquencies, and would point proudly to the heavy, protruding chin.

His visitors were mainly students of the college who were interested in refuting him, and further interested in him as material against which to

hurl imprecation and about which to prophesy downfall and damnation and gnashing of teeth. Harvey served as adequate audience for young preachers at practice in their preaching; and he was as adamant a sinner as ever heard of the fearsome reputation of a God terrible as an army with banners. Harvey would grin amusedly and counter every argument before him with a rushing aggression of words and a torrent of vehement expletive calculated to leave his antagonist speechless and wondering.

He sat smoking in his room one night in early June, hearing with a tolerant assumption the monotonous whether-or-no and the vague, fear-inspiring vaticinations of his most persistent exhorter, one Ridgley Gowell, who had come to Jackson and the Baptist college from the neighboring town of Alamo. Gowell had come with a sense of being inspired to the pastoral estate . . . which might have been a monstrous ego directed into religious inclinations by a strenuous Baptist environment, or might, on the other hand, have been sheer, God-given zeal to spread the holy gospel. At any rate, Ridgley Gowell was a very earnest youth with a salient jaw and a high, broad forehead which paradoxed a pinched space between his pallid little gray eyes. His voice was rather high-pitched and unmelodious

. . . a little rasping . . . offering Harvey's deep bass an advantageous contrast. A discerning person, hearing the two men in conversation, must have been immediately impressed with the fact that Harvey could sing. Indeed, he could sing, and in High School, where elementary voice culture was included in the curriculum, Harvey had been indispensable to the quartet.

Young Gowell was accounted by Dr. Cowan, and the preceptors generally, a sound youth and a leader. Moreover, they knew him for a dominant character and a strong personality; for, did he not accept their teachings, and was not his jaw conspicuously thrust forward?

And because of his character, Harvey chose him, from among all the men he knew, as his particular companion. Their arguments were long and vigorous. Gowell stood up valiantly for his God; Landrum denied Him hourly with a loud positive voice and an insulting bearing. But Harvey really respected Gowell in a little measure, for a while. He respected him in spite of the fact that he would have preferred to hold him in contempt. He realized that he could again have proved that he was no weakling if he could have justified, before the community, an attitude of charitable endurance.

That night, as these two men sat in Harvey's

big, blue-ceilinged room, as Gowell lounged in the softness of a couch, and Harvey held a stiff position bolt upright in a straight chair with his clenched fist resting upon the table in front of him, the young atheist changed his tactics.

"Gowell, I went four miles out of town last Sunday to cover a story for *The Jacksonian* . . . you probably read about it—the tree being blown down and falling on a church," Harvey said.

"No. I didn't read about it."

"Well, when I got out there . . . it was the Prospect Baptist Church, a little wooden building set up on a hill . . . when I got out there, I was as much astonished as I would have been if I were a good Christian. A big oak tree had blown down, fallen on the roof of the church, crushed on through and torn nearly a whole side away. The pulpit was bared to the eyes of the world . . . the first thing I thought of when I saw it was a nigger fight I once watched in which one nigger cut the layer of flesh away from the heart of another one, and I saw the heart of him, bare and unshielded.

"The preacher had been praying when the storm had come up, and, before he'd finished the prayer the tree came crashing through the roof. The preacher stopped his prayer and left his

pulpit . . . in a hurry. Most of the men ran out of the church, the preacher among them. One old lady with a dramatic sense yelled out: "Fear not! Trust in God!" and took up the praying. After the tree had settled in its new place, the preacher came back and preached his sermon. Later, they were all talking about how miraculous it was that none had been killed or injured, and they thanked God for watching over them and saving their important legs and arms and lives.

"What I want to know is, why did God kick the tree down on the church, in the first place, and scare daylights out of them? Why couldn't He have watched over them and protected and saved them a good deal better by just letting the tree stand and the prayer go on? And why, I'd like very much to know, would God want to destroy one of His churches, and a Baptist church at that? Hey? Looks mighty funny to me."

Gowell sat and worked his jaw for a long time, as if chewing a fiber. Then he answered piously:

"God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform."

"Mysterious enough," scoffed Harvey, "mysterious enough, all right. But not so wonderful.

I could 'a' chopped the tree down on the church and done the same thing."

"No, you couldn't," Gowell rejoined eagerly, and desperately. "They'd 'a' heard you chopping on Sunday and stopped you."

Harvey ignored him. Gowell considered his rejoinder for a moment and felt like a fool on account of it. Harvey went on:

"You believers are a funny lot. Your faith is a funny thing. You manage, somehow or another, to believe by the simple process of saying: 'I believe.' For my part, I don't see how you can do it.

"You can't do it . . . not in a million years!

"If you are honest . . . I mean you, Gowell . . . if you are honest, you'll be bound to admit the lack of evidence and confess that your belief can't be any more than a suspicion . . . if it's even that. It might be just a guess and a hope-it's-true. But maybe you can say you suspect there is a God, because you can't think of anybody else who might be responsible for the shape of your nose . . . unless it's the devil—and he proves God if you prove him; you can say that with some reason . . . not much . . . if you are satisfied that the universal physical compensation warrants the acceptance of the

theory in extension. But you can't prove the devil, even. You can say there may be a God, because you don't know for a fact whether there is one or not; but you can't say you know there is one, you know the color of His hair and you know that He's the sort of God that won't submit to Methodist backsliding because he's bound to have Baptist leanings if He's got good sense . . . if you say that, you're talking damned nonsense.

"Well, what else can you say? Nothing.

"Am I right, or am I wrong? Hey?"

Gowell was looking intently at a spot on the floor. He made no start to answer.

Harvey resumed:

"Now, I'm an atheist only in the sense that I don't believe in the God you worship. I mean to say that I can't accept the God you have made to suit your own style of beauty. You see what I mean? I used to say there wasn't any God. Well, that's what I meant; for all I know, there may be a god of some sort or other for every man, cow and molly cottontail in the round earth. But I don't pretend to have measured the length of my personal god's whiskers.

"You've got a certain amount of brains, Gow-

ell; and since you have . . . and can't plead on the ground of incompetence . . . I say you are a coward through and through."

Gowell looked up, straight into Harvey's eyes, and his salient jaw was more salient.

"Why do you say that?" he asked heavily.

"Don't get sore. I'm not making a personal and exclusive charge against you. You won't get lonesome. Most of you are cowards. Here's what I mean: you are afraid . . . all of you are afraid, from Dr. Cowan and Dr. Fox down to you. Deep down in your hearts you don't know whether the religion you profess is a true religion or a fiction . . . and if it's a fiction, I want to state that the Greeks had a better one . . . but you are afraid it is true, and so you stand for it. All you are doing is betting your life that there is a God of the sort you have been told about . . . and you call it a safe bet—you figure it out that you can't lose. It's not a sporting bet, Gowell; and I think a man of your brains and sense of fitness ought to be ashamed for standing by it."

"What do you mean, it's not a sporting bet?" Gowell responded. He was sulky but interested.

"I mean this: You are betting your life that there is a God, and you are saying to yourself: 'Well, if there isn't one, I can't go to heaven

anyhow, no matter how I believe, because there won't be any heaven. But you are standing up for God on the chance that there might be one. If there is, you think you'll win a place in His kingdom. If there's not, there's no chance for you anyhow.

"How about it?"

"There may be something in what you say," Gowell answered slowly. He was obviously worried now.

"Certainly, there's something in it," Harvey went on. "You must see, when you are face to face with yourself, that you're not such a valiant champion of your God as you pretend to be . . . you've got to admit to yourself that you're a fence-straddler of the worst sort. And in addition to that——"

"I admit I'm taking a chance on God," Gowell interrupted, "but I believe it's honorable enough, to take a chance like that."

"But can't you see, Gowell, you're not taking a gentleman's chance? If it were a case of heaven or hell, one or the other, then it would be two-sided. Then it would be a fifty-fifty situation, with your knowledge absolute that a heaven existed and a hell existed. But here, you have this: either there is immortality, or there is oblivion and dust; and your attitude is

that you'll eat your cake and have it, too. You say you'll have to take oblivion along with the rest of them, if that's what it amounts to, but you add that you're not going to take any chances, so you'll prepare for heaven, too. All right, go ahead and prepare; it may be, however, that the God you're betting on, if He does live, holds a pretty low opinion of a man who hedges. If I were that God, I wouldn't think much of a man who tried to put something over me. Perhaps He likes a man better if the man takes a stand on the proposition. If He is the sort of God Dr. Cowan says He is, then your little deceits are bared to His eyes. What do you think about it?"

Harvey filled and lighted his pipe. He opened a book and started reading.

Gowell was quiet for a long time. After almost a half hour of troubled thought, during which his earnest face wore, varyingly, worried, perplexed and stern expressions, he came near enough to an opinion on Harvey's thesis to remark upon it.

But he was standing near the door, and his hat was in his hand before he spoke.

"I'm going now," he said to Harvey, and his voice was almost choking in his throat, "I'm go-

ing out to take a walk and do some thinking. I —I may go over to see Dr. Cowan.

"I'm very much upset about it, Landrum; but I'll admit, for the first time, that I started seeing things as you see them a good while ago.

"I tried not to, but the doubts couldn't be kept down.

"Landrum, I guess I'm not fit to be a preacher. I did want to be one, but—but——

"Good night, I'll see you at class to-morrow."

. . . . . .

But Gowell was not present when the roll was called at Christian Fundamentals class the next day.

He had talked to Dr. Cowan, and had gone back to his home in Alamo.

His father was owner and director of the Alamo Livery & Feed Company. Young Gowell had decided to make the livery business his career.

He could not go forward with his aim to be a shepherd, but he could groom horses.

. . . . . .

II

Dr. Fox, president of the college, wrote a letter to the publisher of *The Jacksonian.*

The letter was composed after the president had delivered a directly personal and somewhat imprecatory address in chapel, publicly disgracing, and expelling from the institution, Harvey Landrum.

Harvey had risen from his seat and stood, of his own volition, before the whole student body. He had stood very straight, and had assumed a vague smile.

He had not the posture nor expression of a shamed and disgraced man.

III

"I'm afraid—" Mr. Wakefield began.

"Needn't be afraid," Harvey interrupted gruffly.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Landrum," he resumed. "that we shall have to do without your services.

"You understand that there is a good deal of feeling about your trouble at the college. Dr. Fox has written me a letter, and, a few minutes ago, he telephoned me to—"

"Well, I guess I could find something else to do, but I wouldn't mind staying here for a while longer. I want to pay you the thousand dollars I borrowed from you a couple of years ago. If I were to continue here, I'd be certain

to pay it eventually . . . as soon as I'd have it saved."

"That's so," old Wakefield submitted, and he sat and thought for a long time after Harvey had left his office.

IV

One of the neighbor-ladies went into great detail in informing Mattie of Harvey's expulsion from the college. Much of her story was synthetic, for she had not enough actual data on his career at the school to establish complete motivation. But her point was, mainly, that Harvey had been preaching destruction, that he had been bearing the flaming torch of negation through the vales of positivism, and that expulsion had been righteous and just . . . only a little tardy.

Mattie would not believe it at first, and the neighbor-lady called in another neighbor-lady to add her hearsay testimony. Then Mattie wept and wailed, and, after her visitor had gone, she buried her face in her arms and sobbed until her distorted little body could entertain her sobs no longer; then she lay down, tired and spent, and gasped until the benison of sleep came to her aid.

At supper that evening, Mattie could not bear

to look at Harvey. Just before it was done, she said to him with a sob in her throat:

"Harvey, honey, I want to talk to you tonight. I wish you'd come to my room whenever it's convenient."

Harvey bowed his head.

Mattie waited in her room until eight o'clock. Harvey had not come. She called to Mrs. Landrum:

"Mother, roll my chair over to Harvey's room."

Mrs. Landrum complied. Mattie knocked three times before Harvey's heavy voice rolled out:

"Come in."

He was sitting on his bed, and his face was dejected, from his creased brow down to his pursed lips.

Mattie sat and looked at him for a moment. She loved him that moment more than she had ever been conscious of loving him; and she had always loved him better than she had loved herself.

"Harvey, baby, did they really expel you from school?"

He tried to answer, but his voice would not come. He nodded his head affirmatively.

"Why did they do it?"

Again, he could not answer. He could do no more than shake his head with some significance of negation, and struggle mightily with himself to keep the tears away.

"Was it because you denied God?"

"Not exactly that," he choked.

"And destroyed the faith of one of the students?"

He had no answer to give her. He sat quietly for a little while. Then he rushed over to Mattie and placed his great, loose arms about her little head. He placed his head on her deficient little bosom and wept unrestrainedly.

"Oh, Mattie! Oh, Mattie!" he cried. "I don't know; I don't know."

"You don't know what, honey?" she questioned tenderly.

"I don't know what I believe. I don't know. I've never known."

"But I know," she said. "Kneel down there by the bed."

Harvey knelt.

Mattie prayed:

"Thou Merciful and Kind Father, Forgiver of the Sinful and Protector of the Weak——"

Harvey heard no more. As he knelt there through the rest of her prayer with his face buried in the bed-cover . . . knelt there through

the rest that he might not offend and disappoint Mattie . . . he recounted the events which had led up to his expulsion and assured himself that he was not regretful for a single incident.

CHAPTER VI

I

HAVING finished his education, Harvey was in a position now to give his whole attention and energy to his work. Old Wakefield, advised by the city editor, decided to retain him; but it was accounted wise to lecture him on his outspokenness, and to point out as a part of his loyal duty that he must conscientiously avoid laying the burden of his personality upon the name of *The Jacksonian.*

"Don't fear," he had replied. "Whenever I say anything, I, personally, stand for it. I can back up my opinions without any support from you or your weak-kneed little newspaper . . . or any other person or organization. If anybody comes to you with a complaint about some statement of mine, you may tell them to come and see me . . . that I said it representing Harvey Landrum and nobody but Harvey Landrum."

He bore his emphasis on every word, and Mr. Wakefield spoke approval mildly, and speculated on how otherwise he might have set forth

his requirements so that he would not have been forced to a defensive bearing so soon.

His problem now was to placate Dr. Fox. But that was not really a great problem for old Wakefield, for he was a sly diplomat and a rather graceful liar . . . in such a small degree that he could easily purge himself by taking up collection on Sunday . . . and so he set about rearranging things in the office so that he might soothe the ruptured feelings of the college official, and at the same time keep Harvey in his employment. The problem now was the soothing of Dr. Fox's feelings, for he had already committed himself to keeping Harvey. He called Harvey into his office a few days after his expulsion from college and proposed to him a new function . . . "only for a few weeks."

"I think it would be excellent training for you to go on the copy desk for a while," he suggested, "Every newspaper man ought to have knowledge of all departments of the game. You won't be there long, I assure you. You can go back to reporting as soon as the college closes for the summer . . . that is to say, as soon as you have become competent in editing copy."

"Don't care to go on the copy desk," Harvey declined.

"But I tell you, it will be good experience."

"Don't want to go."

"Well"—he pondered for a moment—"will you work on the desk if I raise your salary?"

"Depends on how much you raise it."

"Five," offered the publisher.

"Ten," said Harvey.

"Seven-and-a-half."

"Ten," Harvey persisted in his firmest tone.

"Ten," old Wakefield echoed.

II

At once, Mr. Wakefield wrote the following letter:

"*My dear Dr. Fox:* It is with regret that I must tell you that I cannot comply fully with your suggestion that Harvey Landrum be dismissed from our employment. Such drastic action cannot be taken at the present moment because of circumstances of prearrangement, which cannot be broken. However, I have taken action which I account suitable, and have effectually demoted Mr. Landrum to a position of almost no importance.

"Thanking you for your friendly interest in the matter, I am,

"Your obedient servant,

"Oliver Wakefield."

III

The office into which Harvey had been "effectually demoted" gave him such authority as he had not had in his other position, and, as a result, he became a tyrant, whose like had not been known in the premises of *The Jacksonian* since the day of the first Oliver Wakefield.

There never came into his hands a story from one of the younger reporters that was quite right, according to the unapproachable standard that he fixed in his mind, and his loud complaints were now turned against reporters . . . complaints which once had been shouted at copy readers. Their volume almost denied the fact that he had once been a reporter himself.

Moreover, Harvey soon began to express a mood of dissatisfaction with the work of the copy readers around him . . . although he had no authority over the least of them. And yet, one or two of them accepted his bullying and seemed to be fearful of his disapproval even more than of the disapproval of old George Mahan, chief of the desk. Nor was Harvey in any way respectful to Mahan, when he gave him any attention. The old man seldom spoke, and Harvey had little opportunity to speak to him. Therefore, he did not flaunt his disrespect for Mahan,

but it existed just the same. It should not have existed, for respect was due Mahan; he had had long years of experience, he was fair and his bearing generally was dignified and decorous. He was a firm man; his tone was consistently quiet, and it was really due to him that *The Jacksonian* was accounted creditable and credible, and had infrequently been subject to libel action.

Certainly, he had no respect for young newspaper men. But his attitude of disrespect for them was nothing but personal honesty.

It is natural and reasonable that he should have been disgusted by Harvey's loud bellowing and his assumption of wide authority.

One day, a story which Joe Vardon had written lay on the desk. It had been edited, and Harvey had not a vestige of a reason for looking at it, other than that he had a moment of idleness. But he picked it up and glanced through it, and a phrase caught his eye of which he disapproved. He looked around the desk.

"Who the hell edited this copy?" he questioned in his thunderous manner.

Lee Murchison looked up.

"It wasn't me," he denied in the exact manner of the little school-boy who replied to the inspector's query as to who discovered America.

"I edited it," Mahan said quietly, and Harvey turned quickly toward him, surprised that the confession had come from that quarter. He was disconcerted for a moment, but even as he had turned, his mouth had been open for speaking the specifications of his objection. Mahan was not even looking at him; he was engaged in editing another story. Harvey was just about to turn away, when the old man lifted his head and looked for an instant into his eyes.

"What about it?" Mahan asked.

Harvey's eyes dropped.

"It's sort of badly written," Harvey answered lamely.

"You asked who edited it," Mahan reminded him.

Harvey's voice grew stronger. It occurred to him that he had to make a show of it.

"And the editing didn't improve it any."

"Humph!" the old man grunted and returned to his work.

Harvey blushed bright red, made an excuse for leaving the room for a moment and went out.

The next day he demanded that he be relieved of duty as copy reader; and, since the college year had ended and Dr. Fox had gone to the mountains for the summer, he was returned to the reportorial staff.

He could not explain it to his own satisfaction, and would not confess it to his own ears; but he had come to be disturbed, somehow, by the presence of old Mahan. He would not confess that he feared him . . . he was disinclined to confess that he feared any man alive on any conceivable ground . . . but, for some indefinable reason, he could not drive himself to talk in his bullying tones to the old man. After his reinstatement as a reporter, he grew noticeably more respectful to the men who read his copy. He told the reporters over whom he still domineered that his change of attitude was entirely due to his new point of view, to his having served with the laborers on the copy desk and having learned the difficulties of their labors. Yet, it was remarked by Lee Murchison to William Simmons that Harvey seemed to raise a row with him every Thursday . . . that being Mr. Mahan's day of rest.

"I notice," remarked Simmons to Harvey, one Thursday; "that you never hop onto Lee and the others when Mr. Mahan is here. Why is that?"

"That's a fact," Harvey admitted, "but it's because old Mahan knows his business; that's why it is. He keeps 'em in line. When he's away, they mess things up. They need to be told where they get off, when they start taking

a lot of authority. Every one of 'em's got the authority complex. It's funny what a little authority will do for a simple head like Lee's."

Simmons saw the logic of it; and his faith in Harvey was renewed, and strengthened even, for Harvey had shown a tinge of fairness.

IV

It was two winters afterward that Harvey succeeded Ed. Price as city editor.

He had worked his way to a position of complete dominance over the other reporters, and when the downfall of Price came, it was inevitable that Harvey should have been given the place.

The downfall of Price was a mysterious affair.

Harvey and the city editor left the office together late one afternoon after the day's stint had been accomplished.

During the night, Price's wife telephoned three times to ask where her husband was, but the night man could tell her no more than that he did not know.

The next morning, Harvey swaggered into the office and took his post at the city editor's desk. He announced to the staff as it assembled that he was acting in the capacity of city editor, and when Mr. Wakefield came, he reported that

Price was not well and had requested him to sit in his chair that day.

No sooner had old Wakefield closed the door of his office than his telephone rang. It was Mrs. Price. She had not seen her husband, nor heard word of him, since the day before, when he had left her for his day's work. Old Wakefield was astonished. He had had a vision of Price at home in bed with tooth ache or stomach ache, or something like that.

"Hold the phone a minute, Mrs. Price. I'll ask Mr. Landrum about him," he said.

Mrs. Price held the phone as directed, while old Wakefield went out to make inquiry of Harvey.

"I didn't say he'd been home, did I?" Harvey responded to the question. "I didn't say where he was. But if she must know all about it, you can tell her that her husband's in jail."

"Jail?"

"J-A-I-L," Harvey spelled out.

"Well, I don't care to tell Mrs. Price that. I must know more of the details. Come into my office, Mr. Landrum; I want you to tell me all you know about this—er—unfortunate circumstance."

"All right. Get rid of Mrs. Price first."

Old Wakefield got rid of Mrs. Price, by directing her to call again in half an hour.

"We'll try to locate him," he assured her.

He turned to Harvey. His manner was really confidential this time.

"You say Ed. Price is in jail?"

"Yes, I said Ed. Price is in jail."

"What for, I'd like to know?" Old Wakefield's astonishment had reached his eyes by now, and he was blinking fast.

"Drunkenness and disorderly conduct."

"Aw! Is that a fact? Can it be?"

"It is," Harvey tersely affirmed.

"You mean to tell me Ed. Price was drunk?"

"I've already told you," Harvey replied impudently. "Look here, Mr. Wakefield; I don't care to be bearing tales. I don't want to report anything that might injure Ed. Price."

"Oh, but you must; you must. It is your duty as an employee of *The Jacksonian.* You must tell me all about it. It is my right to know."

"Well, if I must, I suppose I must." Harvey's tone was dramatically mournful.

"What was the disorderly conduct charge for?" Wakefield questioned.

"He was fighting-drunk. Threw a nutmeg shaker through the mirror back of Halstead's soda fountain. They had him arrested and he

kicked Officer Pruett's shins all the way to the station house."

"Merciful goodness!" exclaimed old Wakefield. "Who ever heard of such outrageous conduct?"

"It wasn't so bad," Harvey defended lamely. "You remember that I knocked a policeman down once and spent a few days in jail for it."

"Yes, that's true; that's true."

"But I was sober, and fighting for the paper," Harvey added in a low tone . . . which was not by any means inaudible . . . as if he were drawing a distinction merely for the satisfaction of his own conscience.

Old Wakefield heard his cue.

"Yes, that was very different. You were not drunk, and you were standing up for the paper. That's very true; very true."

"Were you with Ed. last night?"

"Yes."

"Were you drunk, too?"

"No. I took a drink or two, but I know when to stop. I've never been drunk."

"Why did you let him get drunk?"

"He is a full-grown man."

"Send Simmons down to bail him out," the publisher directed. "Tell Simmons to bring Ed. straight up here.

"We'll help him cook up a good story and then let him go home to his wife."

. . . . . .

As Harvey had declared to his employer, he had never been drunk. He was afraid to get drunk. He had heard it said somewhere, and had believed it to be true . . . or feared it might be true . . . that the shell falls away from an intoxicated man as the husk is stripped from an ear of corn, leaving him naked to the soul, exposing his flaws and weaknesses as God Himself may see them.

. . . . . .

V

Price was a dejected figure, as he walked into the office, holding tightly to Simmons's arm. The staff members and the office boys looked at him and gaped in amazement. No one could mistake his uneven stride. He kept his eyes directed to the floor. Ten paces had been taken before their gaze, when his pride moved him to snatch his arm away from Simmons. He traveled in a dizzy line toward Wakefield's office.

Before the old gentleman had composed himself to offer a tactful greeting, Price began:

"I resign. I don't want to be city editor. I won't work in the same office with that chinless,

double-crossing dog, Landrum. And I can't stay here with—" His voice choked.

"Now, now," old Wakefield soothed, "don't be too hasty, son. We all make mistakes. Sit down and let's talk over things."

Price sat down.

"Now, tell me how it all happened. I didn't know that you were a drinking man?"

He seemed not to hear the question. He countered with another.

"Has my wife telephoned?"

"Yes. But she doesn't know. We can fix up a story to tell her if it's necessary. Now tell me how it all happened."

"That damned Landrum got me drunk."

"What? What? You say Landrum got you drunk?"

"I—think he did."

"How in heaven's name did he?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure. But he did, I know he did."

Wakefield went to the door and called Harvey.

"Mr. Landrum," he addressed Harvey, as sternly as he could address any man; "Mr. Landrum, Mr. Price, here, says you got him drunk."

"He's a liar," responded Harvey.

Price clenched his fists and started to rise.

"Keep your seat," Harvey bellowed.

Price sank back into the chair.

"All right. Go ahead. I want to hear what this is that you're telling on me."

"Go ahead," echoed Mr. Wakefield.

"I said—I said you got me drunk last night, and you did, damn you!"

"That's nonsense, Price," Harvey replied.

"No, it's not nonsense. Didn't you tell me you knew where good whiskey . . . the best in town . . . was sold for the least money; and didn't you urge me to go around there with you . . . and didn't I tell you three or four times that I didn't want to go?"

"Yes; that's quite true. And you remember that it all came up in the course of our conversation on the opportunities a reporter has to find out things. And I thought you'd be man enough to stop drinking it after two or three drinks. I was man enough."

"You paid for my drinks after we got there, and the stuff was poison. It tasted all right, but it was dynamite. Awful stuff. It took my senses away.

"And I believe you knew what rank stuff it was," Price concluded.

"Don't make an absolute fool of yourself," Harvey said. He rose and walked out, slamming the door behind him.

Price covered his face with his hands, and there was a long moment of silence.

Then, old Wakefield's soft voice sounded:

"Go home, Ed., and get a good rest. Come back when you're feeling well, and we'll talk things over."

Price looked at him for a moment. Then he stood—very straight—cast his head high and replied:

"Thank you for your fairness, sir; but I shall never come back."

CHAPTER VII

I

HARVEY must have inherited soft teeth from his mother. Mrs. Landrum had preferred soft foods for many years; a tough steak was beyond her fortitude, hard candy beyond her power, chewing gum beyond her endurance. She was not greatly disturbed: she liked soft foods better, anyhow.

Harvey's teeth began to show signs of decay when he was nineteen years old. By the time he had reached twenty-one, two 'molars on the left side, an upper and a lower, and a lower one on the right had disintegrated into cavernous hollows which seemed to his inquisitive tongue to be larger than the teeth had been.

When he had discovered the first cavity, a pang of fear had shot through him at thought of the dentist. Once, when he was a little boy, he had been taken to a dentist, and he had never forgotten that visit. He had gone merely to have a milk tooth extracted, but before his time had come he had seen a girl in the plush chair,

and the dentist had been grinding away somewhere far in her stretched mouth. The buzzing sound of the grinding machine had frightened him, and when there had escaped an involuntary cry of pain, Harvey had been terribly afraid, and had whimpered until his mother had quieted him.

And now, he had a tooth to be filled. Well, he would put it off until it started to ache. He still had another side in which to chew his victuals. One side was as good as two, he concluded. Come to think of it, he had always chewed on only one side.

It was several days before he accustomed himself to the change from the decrepit side to the sound. Once, he bit down on a piece of meat, and a pain shot to his brain. He cried out, and Mattie asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing," he replied.

The hollow tooth was his secret. He would not have admitted its presence had it been exposed. If anybody knew he had it, there would inevitably be speculation on why he did not go to a dentist and have it filled. Some persons might even go so far as to suspect him of being afraid.

Then, one day, a tooth in the sound side crumpled.

Harvey feared he would be forced to go to the

dentist now . . . or starve. But dinner followed breakfast, and supper followed dinner, and he limped along by selections of appropriate foods, and by careful chewing.

When the third molar failed, he was not greatly concerned. He had made his mind up that he would get along as best he could, and let nobody know. It was his own business, nobody's else. His teeth were his own property, if anything in the world can be called a man's property. Certainly, nobody was going to be looking into his mouth unless he invited inspection. He wasn't intending to pass out any such invitations.

He struggled along for a year, and was becoming convinced that he could struggle along for several more years with his defective molars. Then, one night as he lay in bed, his tongue found a little rough spot between the incisors, inside. He plucked at the rough spot with his finger nails. It grew. Within a month it had come through, and was a little black hole barely above the cutting edges of the front two teeth.

Mattie saw it one evening when he smiled.

"Harvey, honey," she said, "I believe you've got a cavity in your front teeth."

He clamped his mouth shut.

"I have not," he snapped.

"Let me see."

He hesitated. Then he responded:

"Oh, it's all right. Just a jam seed, or something."

"Let me see," Mattie persisted.

He pressed his upper lip against his teeth, and raised it the meagerest fraction of an inch, like a cat at the beginning of a snarl.

"A little higher," Mattie said. Then, "It is a cavity, just as I thought. You must go to a dentist at once, before it gets bigger."

Harvey walked out of the room, muttering:

"I hate dentists; I've always hated 'em."

But for the rest of the week, he worried about the visible black hole. He was reluctant to smile, fearful that the defect might be seen and the inference drawn that he, Harvey Landrum, was afraid of dentists.

One night, as he worried about his predicament, he remembered a sign he had seen on a second story window in a Royal Street building:

"Dr. C. C. Winston, Painless Dental Parlors."

He made his mind up that he would go there. Accordingly, the next morning, he went to Dr. Winston's office.

Harvey was weak and humiliated as he took his seat in the plush chair. He didn't want to open his mouth. He didn't want Dr. Winston to

see his back teeth. It occurred to him that he was being humbled. He reflected, what business was it of the dentist's?

Apprehension came over him. He had no further room in his mind for abstract reflection.

"Are you sure it's painless?" he asked.

"If you take gas, it will be quite painless," the doctor assured him.

"Gas?" Harvey questioned. "What does it do?"

"Puts you to sleep—renders you unconscious for a minute. When you come to, it's all over. No dreams."

Harvey thought for a moment. He thought of death, and loss of identity. The fear occurred to him that it would be like dying for a little while . . . that while he would sit there, dreamless, without the power to be even aware of his own existence, he would not be Harvey Landrum; he would be a hunk of meat without a name.

"No," he declined, "I'll take it without gas. But please don't hurt me much.

"Make the filling gold."

He opened his mouth and gripped the arms of the chair.

He cried out two or three times, and once stopped the dentist's hand before the buzzing in-

strument reached his mouth. But, at last, the job was finished.

"How about those molars?" the dentist asked. "They're in bad shape."

"Not now. Some other time. I've got to go now."

"I can give you an appointment for to-morrow morning at nine."

"All right," Harvey assented quickly, "nine o'clock."

The dentist noted the appointment in his book.

Harvey went to the office of *The Jacksonian,* and he bore a great sense of pride in his new gold filling.

He did not keep the next morning's nine o'clock appointment. He did not keep faith with Dr. Winston. He hated dentists; he'd always hated them.

CHAPTER VIII

I

MATTIE was frankly worried about Harvey.

"He's getting on all right in his work," she said to a neighbor lady, "but he's not a well-rounded man. Here he is, city editor of *The Jacksonian,* with salary enough to support a wife, and he hasn't thought of girls. It's positively unhealthy; that's what it is. I do think that a man ought to be well-rounded."

Accordingly, she called Harvey into conference and addressed him on the necessity of being well-rounded.

Harvey responded with an amused laugh.

"If we were all well-rounded we'd all be just alike, and you couldn't make any choice between us except by our appearances. That would place me at a slight disadvantage, Mattie. The well-rounded man knows the conventional thing to say when he steps into a mud-puddle, precisely how to pull his breeches nearer to him when he sits down, and how to eat a club-

sandwich. Well, I don't know what to say when I step in a mud-puddle . . . and I guess I'd say a different thing every time I'd step into one. I don't pull my breeches at all when I sit down, because baggy knees don't worry me much. And I don't eat club sandwiches."

"I don't mean that," she said, "I don't mean that you ought to do all sorts of little conventional things . . . that you ought to try to do every little thing in the same way that nearly everybody else does. I mean, for example, you ought to be going with girls and thinking about getting married. You never have mentioned a girl, and I don't believe you have ever looked at one with intentions of any sort.

"Harvey, it's just not normal."

Harvey's face turned a little whiter. Then he blushed slightly.

"Humph! I haven't got time for them. Besides, I don't like them. Got no respect for them. Schopenhauer says——"

"I don't care what Schopenhauer . . . or whatever you call him . . . says; he's probably a foreigner or something that wants to run this country to suit himself because he thinks he's smart.

"I know what I think . . . I think you're timid. I was talking to Mrs. Fargason about it

yesterday. She was wondering why you never went with girls. I told her I thought it was just bashfulness."

"Good Lord, Mattie! You didn't tell her that!" He was obviously flustered. He turned around and walked out.

II

In the privacy of his room he sat and thought. He was bashful, he confessed in the crypt of his mind . . . and he recalled the incident of his presenting a bunch of violets to Fannie Cartright one day when he was a little school-boy: how he had had to fight to charge his heart with courage enough, and how his stomach had contracted for the shame of it when she had let the flowers drop from her limp hand to the floor. He thought how a little gust of fear swept over him even now when he saw Fannie on the street.

"I am. I am," he said aloud.

Then the fear came to him that perhaps there were those . . . like Mrs. Fargason . . . who suspected it. It occurred to him that Fannie Cartright must certainly know it.

That night he lay awake and tossed about for hours in his bed. Before he went to sleep at last, the enormity of his diffidence had been so accepted by his agitated mind, that he had re-

solved upon a quick campaign to rout whatever impressions his bashfulness had made upon the people who suspected it. His plans encompassed Fannie Cartright, for she stood out in his mind as a portion of the responsibility for his timidity. He went to sleep determined to woo her.

Marriage was not in his intent. His only aim was to show the world that girls were not to be feared by him . . . that he could be as bold a suitor as could any of the little slick-haired, pool-room sports. But as for marriage . . . he shuddered himself awake from a growing torpor. Marriage . . . he could not bear to think of such intimacy as the word inferred.

III

Three or four days later, Harvey met Fannie Cartright on the street. He was conscious of that same old sinking feeling in his stomach, but he forced himself to act according to his predetermination in spite of it . . . perhaps because of it. She was coming down the street and he was moving in the other direction. They met a few steps from the door of Halstead's soda fountain. Harvey lifted his hat awkwardly and planted himself directly in her career.

"How do, Fannie; how have you been getting along?" he greeted her.

She was speechless with astonishment for a moment; then, in her effort to rectify her speechless moment she rushed forth into a polite acceptance of his advance.

"Fine, Harvey; just fine. And how have you been? Well, I hope. I've been hearing some mighty fine things about you. It does look like you'd come out to see somebody sometime."

"I'd like to come out to see you to-night."

"Why, Harvey! This *is* unexpected. I don't know. I'm not doing anything in particular to-night, but——"

There was a pause while Fannie hunted for something in her mind.

Harvey swallowed hard and spoke with difficulty:

"We could go to the picture show." His voice was almost a plea, and he despised himself upon recognizing the tone.

"Why, all right. I reckon I could go. You know where I live, don't you? Well, come at about eight. We can go in my car."

Harvey was on hand at the appointed hour. He was diffident to the point of fidgetiness. On the way to the show he was extremely conscious of the paucity of conversational material. But Fannie ran on in a flighty mood, and the per-

sistent direction of her monologue was toward Guy . . . it was, "Guy said this," and "Guy said that," and "Guy and I at the party," and "Guy and I at the show."

When they had become comfortably seated in the theater and the picture had begun to spin he was glad, for there was no need for him to say a word. She continued her end of the conversation, intermittently saying something or other which was commentary, or quoting Guy's wise criticisms on pictures they had seen together.

On the way home, Harvey was again uncomfortable and embarrassed. He was by this time conscious of the great failure of his venture, and for some reason . . . perhaps an emotional one . . . he was inclined to hold Guy Ertle responsible for it.

He was not showing strength . . . he was certainly feeling calfish . . . and, for a fact, he didn't know what he might say or do that would place him in his rightful position of dominance, he reflected.

He sat in the porch swing with her for a half hour, assuming a bearing of reticence and severity in order that she might never suspect how ill at ease he really was. She continued her inane chattering, still featuring Guy, until at last he

felt that he must either take his hat and take his leave or insult her to let her know how fearless and disrespectful of her he was.

He decided that he would better leave and come at another time to bear his proofs of mastery.

"I'd better go," he said.

"So soon?" was her polite acknowledgment.

"Yes, it's getting late," he answered.

"I've enjoyed talking to you so much this evening; do come again," she said.

"I will," Harvey promised.

They arose from the swing and moved toward the house entrance, Harvey to descend the stoop and go home, Fannie to leave him at her door. As they walked down the porch, and parting time drew nearer, Harvey's courage took a high leap. He would assert himself before he left, he determined. As they shook hands at the door, standing in the light that came through the glass panel, he said:

"Fannie, if I wanted to marry you, I could."

That was very blunt.

She looked into his face to find a smile. There was not the vaguest promise of one.

Then she became indignant. Her face grew red with anger.

Harvey saw it coming, and it disturbed him. In his uncertainty he thought to make a retraction:

"But I don't want to," he said, floundering.

That infuriated her.

"You monster!" she cried. "You think I'd marry you? You? I wouldn't marry you if you had a dozen chins. The Lord knows I don't want you since you haven't any."

He turned about and walked at a very fast rate toward town. He didn't want to go home. He wanted society . . . to take his mind away from the society of the evening. He decided that he'd like to play a game of pocket billiards. He turned his steps toward Sutton's Pool & Billiard Hall.

The first person on whom his eyes rested was Guy Ertle. Harvey looked at him and frowned. He still felt that Guy was in some measure responsible for his uncomfortable evening.

"You've been to see my girl, I hear," Guy said.

Suddenly it dawned upon Harvey's mind that Fannie would be certain to tell Guy every detail of his visit. He became aware of the necessity of punishing Guy. It was unreasonable, he knew. But his instinct told him to hold his self-respect by attacking Guy with all the concentra-

tion of his purpose to be strong. He walked up to where Guy was standing, and without saying a word slapped his face resoundingly.

Guy stepped back in astonishment.

"What the hell!" he exclaimed, and then, taking consideration of the unwarranted nature of the attack, he lost his temper entirely and struck out at Harvey with all his power.

Harvey side-stepped and hooked him in the face with his right fist as Guy shot by him. Guy turned and rushed, hoping to get his long arms around Harvey's body and to bear down on him with his greater weight; but Harvey peppered him in the face with stinging lefts and rights until Guy gave it up as hopeless and turned and walked away. Harvey followed him to the back of the room. Guy went out the back door without turning his head. Harvey strutted toward the front door. A police officer stood at the front entrance, grinning. Harvey stopped in his tracks, and heard his heart beat abnormally; he did not want to be arrested now. He wanted to go home and sleep in his comfortable bed. If he were arrested, Guy could testify . . . and there were others to back his testimony . . . that he had attacked him without cause.

Harvey gathered his courage and walked on toward the street.

"How did it start, Mr. Landrum?" the officer asked.

"Oh, he was trying to bully me," Harvey answered.

The policeman thought: "A man who'd try to bully him must be a fool."

IV

It was about a year afterward . . . in the springtime, almost a year afterward . . . that William Simmons escorted Miss Eleanor Witherspoon to the city desk one morning and introduced her to the city editor. He had observed her keenly as she had come from the outer door. He saw how tall and straight she was . . . how haughty her carriage. But it was not really haughty, he amended to himself: it was stately, majestic. He saw that she was beautiful, and wondered who she was. Then she came near, and he did not dare continue his scrutiny. He reddened and turned to his work. Simmons called him to attention and made the introduction.

"How do?" said Harvey. "Anything you want me to do for you?"

She didn't answer for a full minute, but looked steadily at him, with her mouth seeming to be about to open. She was frankly staring, and so he mustered his boldness and stared back.

Then he took note of her deep gray eyes and her strong oval face. He liked her darkness, it was almost sinister. He marked beauty, intelligence and strength. Moreover, independence to the point of arrogance. He had never seen hair so black.

Then, her staring done, she laughed outright; and Harvey blushed vermilion. He knew she was laughing at his lacking chin. But he said nothing. He remarked to himself, however, that she'd get damned little out of him, no matter what she wanted; he thought fleetingly that he'd knock her down if she were a man or he a woman, or if there was not this absurd tradition about deference to skirts and their contents.

Then she spoke, and her voice enchanted him. He was conscious of the same old sinking feeling in his stomach which he thought had gone forever when he had left Fannie Cartright's front porch that night. Her voice was like a rich violin note. The vibrations of it thrilled him.

"Mr. Landrum, our league here in Jackson is giving an amateur play next month, for the benefit of a home for crippled children. I'm in charge of publicity for it, and I've come to ask you to help us by giving news space to it."

He thought as she talked that perhaps after all she had not been laughing in derision, that it had been her manner of being pleasant; and yet his developed attitude of contempt toward women was justified a little more in his mind by the vague apprehension that she had been startled, or amused. It was Harvey's defensive instrument to be contemptuous of all things which offended him.

"To be sure that you wouldn't have any bother about it," Miss Witherspoon was continuing, "I'll write the news items about the play myself and send them down to you."

It was Harvey's turn to laugh.

"You don't know how to write a news story," he said gruffly. "Simmons, I put you in charge of Miss Witherspoon and her play."

Simmons was pleased.

Harvey arose from his chair.

"Good morning," he said, "come again when we're not so busy."

Eleanor blushed deeply, cast her head high and left the office in a rage. Simmons, who had been placed in charge of her, followed her out of the door.

"I hate him. He's a beast," she said.

"He's not so bad," Simmons defended, "he was good enough to put me——"

An office boy came out the door and interrupted them.

"Mr. Simmons, Mr. Landrum says to come back inside."

"Tell him I'll be back in a few minutes," William said, flaunting his independence.

The office boy turned, the door came shut and Eleanor said:

"He's the most monstrously horrible-looking creature I ever saw."

"SIMMONS!" the city editor's voice came in a tremendous roar from the office.

William, thoroughly humiliated in the sight of the woman he adored with all his being, turned sheepishly and left her standing there.

V

Eleanor dreamed about Harvey Landrum that night. Her dream was rather a nightmare than a dream. She was driving down the street . . . West Union Street it was . . . in Egbert Turpin's car. Egbert was with her for a moment, and then it was Tom Sims or William Simmons . . . she couldn't make out exactly which. Then it seemed to be a sort of composition of the three, and she discovered to her amazement that they never had been separate and individual objects as she had fancied them in her wakefulness . . .

that they were really all one being. She was a little disturbed by the fact . . . but there the fact was, and so she had to find it somewhat consoling.

They were going over the track of the L. & C. Railroad, going at a slow, drifting rate, not worried about trains, because there was no train in sight: her escort had looked carefully in both directions.

But just as the car reached the track a train seemed to spring up out of the earth and rush down upon them. She could not move. She tried with all her will to move, to jump, to scream, but she was as paralyzed as though she had been an insensate thing.

Then she saw a miracle.

Down the path of air measured by the street's width, flying without wings yet flying at a great rate of speed, came a monster . . . a monster that was as huge as the locomotive which was about to crush away her life. And this monster was a human shape, long arms, long legs . . . all members loose and flapping . . . great, glaring red eyes and short, chinless face. It wore a brown, baggy suit, especially baggy at the knees. It was Harvey Landrum, and she saw him in a dream-instant as she had seen him that day actually.

She saw him rush toward the locomotive and meet it with all his force.

The dream went utterly wild then.

She was cheering at a football game. The teams were clashing head-on.

One team was made up entirely of locomotive engines.

The other consisted of eleven Harvey Landrums.

She was cheering mightily for the locomotives, and was conscious in her dream of a great depth of disappointment when the Harvey Landrums gradually pushed the locomotives back—back—back—across the white lines and among the people crowded along the lines.

She screamed and awoke.

VI

All the next day Eleanor fought to remove the picture of the ugly face of the man from her mind. She could not, and that night she went to bed with the fear in her thought that she might dream of him again.

Somehow, he fascinated her.

Several times during the next few days she found herself aware of the impulse to go down to the office of *The Jacksonian* to see him . . . just to set eyes on him again and see whether he was

really as monstrous as she had come to picture him.

But she waited for a legitimate excuse to go.

As soon as her dramatic project had got so far along that there was news of its progress, she wrote an account of it in the most graceful way she knew and carried it down to the office. Her intent was to give it to William Simmons. But when she arrived, William Simmons was not there. She looked frantically around for Joe Vardon: he, too, was out on an assignment.

What must be, must be, she reasoned; and so she boldly walked up to the city desk and handed her copy to Harvey. He glanced at it and put it in his basket.

Eleanor stood there in indecision, not quite sure of herself . . . not knowing whether to speak to him or to turn and walk away. She thrust her chin forward.

"There's the report of our play—the advance report—Mr. Landrum."

"See it is," Harvey responded, without raising his head.

"Well, aren't you going to read it?"

Her voice was almost tearful, he thought; and amazingly sweet.

He looked up into her face, saw how serious her gray eyes were, and showed his teeth in a

smile more pleasant than Eleanor suspected he owned. She responded with a gasp that signified the breaking of tension, and then she smiled the most glorious smile he had ever seen. He liked her then. He liked her very much; and this was in addition to and apart from any other sentiment he might have had. But he was aware of her nearness to him as he had never been conscious of a woman's nearness to him. Yet he gave no sign of it. He felt it would be weakness to show that he was moved.

He picked up the sheets of paper she had given him and read them through hurriedly.

"Rotten!" he commented. "Give the facts to an office boy and let him take notes to give to Simmons.

"Oh, Jimmie!" he summoned an office boy.

Eleanor had never been so humiliated, but she lost none of her majesty of bearing.

"Thank you, Mr. Landrum; you are most kind."

The note of irony in her voice was clear and unmistakable.

VII

After she had gone, Harvey sat at his desk for a long time in a sort of stupor. He had never had such an experience before, and he

speculated on it. Fannie Cartright had been infinitely small in comparison. It was not because Miss Witherspoon was beautiful, he thought. He had seen other beautiful women, and they had fled his mind as they had passed his vision. It was rather because she was strong . . . her whole attitude was of strength. She was impudent, certainly; but certainly honest impudence is strength.

Lee Murchison came up to the desk to talk.

"Know who that little high-headed dame is . . . that little check-reined one who just came in here?"

"Her name's Miss Witherspoon," said Harvey.

"Well, she's the old Judge's daughter. And she's the queen of this town of Jackson, if you didn't know it. My wife and I were talking about her a day or two ago. She said this Eleanor Witherspoon can marry just about anybody in town she wants to . . . and I know of two, personally, she could have at the bat of an eyelash: Joe Vardon and Willie Simmons don't talk about anything else . . . but she won't have any of 'em. Thinks she's too good for 'em . . . and I sort of agree with her. Even turned down old cotton-mill Turpin's elegant, hand-raised son. She's a hard proposition, I hear."

"Uh huh," Harvey replied.

As he sat there at his desk that day, Harvey was more painfully conscious of his shortcomings than he had been in years. Here was the only woman who had ever profoundly appealed to him, who had for him an undeniable opposite polarity . . . and he felt that she was for him unattainable. He looked at William Simmons sitting at his desk, and Joe Vardon leaning against the wall cleaning his rakish pipe; he knew these two to be neutral characters, somewhat colorless unless all the type they represented might be called colorful. He felt that these milksops could approach her with more confidence and more justification for confidence than he could, and the thought left him in a state of dejection that was ruinous to his day. He covered his face with his hands and whispered the name of the God who had been so delinquent in blessing him.

That night as he lay awake in his bed, he thought vaguely of the weakness of him . . . fear of failure would hold him in check; that would be the why of it if he were to decline to pay his suit to Eleanor.

He could not bear the thought that her father might look on his face and wait for his departure to declare his disapproval.

And he confessed in the depth of his mind that there was timidity: he was timid about her; she had set up an empty, vacuous sensation in his heart or stomach or somewhere near-by every time he had seen her; and he knew quite well that his rudeness and his gruffness had been entirely assumed to call attention away from his discomfiture. He reflected that he had wanted to talk gently to her . . . somehow as he occasionally talked gently to Mattie.

He was drifting away into sleep. Then, in the flutter of an instant, the flash of an idea caught his somnolent mind, bringing him wide awake.

Why would not Eleanor Witherspoon serve as an accessory goal for him? She was unattainable . . . famously unattainable; . . . then, would it not be a new and tremendous victory if he were to overwhelm her with his strength of purpose and make her his wife? Would it not prove again to the world about him that Harvey Landrum was a strong man? That the lack of a chin was not . . . in the case of Harvey Landrum, at any rate . . . significant of weakness? It would; he knew it would be the crowning proof.

That he loved her was of little importance now.

In the crucible of his new motive the element of love was inconsiderable. Whether he loved her or not, she could serve him admirably as an instrument to aid in the fulfilment of the purpose of his life.

CHAPTER IX

I

THE light of day brought difficulties. As Harvey lay in his bed and watched the gray of morning come through his windows, his thoughts became involved and his purpose to seek and win Eleanor Witherspoon was almost lost in the labyrinth of them. His love for her overwhelmed him, swamped him, carried his mind to a height of magnanimity he had never reached before: he came to a moment's decision that he would not marry her in spite of the fact that he loved her powerfully . . . that to inflict his ugly, sinful self upon her would be too great an injustice . . . too unkind. He was near to tears as he came to the realization that he could not bring himself to set forth cold-bloodedly to trampling her down in his career toward an unrelated end. But his purpose was so strong that he saw the expediency of using every item of evidence he could find.

Perhaps he would have yielded to the timidity of his nature and been content, after a fashion,

to worship Eleanor Witherspoon as an ideal and a figment had there not been the memory in his mind of her laughter that day in the office. He thought of that and it gave him the will to be strong. He determined that he would go on to prove his theorem.

But he speculated on whether his power was enough to overcome so tremendous a series of obstacles as he was certain he would face if he should try to take this scornful woman for himself.

"If I were sure that everybody was convinced of my strength, then I might end my effort now and spend my remaining days in the drab routine of office work," he thought. "Then I could try to win her through my love for her."

Why not?

He was comfortable. He had enough salary to take care of a wife. His work was not difficult. And the whole tradition of his environment established the admirability of getting a good job and settling down.

But, he reasoned, there was no point in that. If he could win her at all it would indubitably be by means of his overpowering dominance and will to win her. After all, he had no great problem. Too little of the world knew his strength. He

would advertise it farther, and she would serve him as an instrument.

He could not settle down. For after a passage of time men would forget his conquests and judge him by external things. Settling down . . . to Harvey the expression meant yielding to life, submitting to circumstances; and he saw that as weakness. Had he not made himself a stubborn little boy, fabricated stubbornness out of his submissive clay? And he would not become mature as other men became mature. The thing that other men called maturity, he saw as amounting to this settling down . . . the name they gave defeat and bafflement . . . the conclusion they have reached after butting against the wall of circumstance until their heads have been sorely battered—the conclusion that it were wisdom in the beginning to have climbed over with a step-ladder or not at all.

He could not subscribe to it, for the same reason that he could not subscribe to mass opinion. He declared himself an individualist because the appearance of individualism was to him the appearance of strength, for the individualist qualifies himself as a man who stands aggressively apart from the opinions which men would force upon him . . . as he had stood apart when

he was a student in the Baptist College . . . and as a fighting man who will not compromise with life, who will not settle down to smugness and complacency. If Harvey Landrum had a little house with a little front yard, a little wife and a little automobile and a little child or two, and was accustomed every Sunday afternoon to play at picnicking in Lancaster Park, even his less prosperous and less contented neighbors would be inclined to label him a weak man . . . not because of his actions . . . but because he would not be sufficiently offsetting the evidence of weakness borne by his face. He had long before realized that he could never prove his theorem by striving to become a substantial, valuable citizen. If he were to join the church and become a deacon, they would only repute him weak. The influence of a lodge would be the same. Sometimes he laughed to think about the complex forces: so many men he knew were finding outlets for their vanities in vigorous church or lodge activities—what an easy way to gain distinction if there were only small obstacles to surmount! But for Harvey Landrum it would mean ruin; it would mean surrender. It were all right for those men known as sound; but such soundness Harvey saw as the soundness of mediocrity, the distinction gained being the distinction of attain-

ing mediocrity before the eyes of spectators who fear that they are less than mediocre. Well, that were too inadequate for his consideration: so long as any man who had ever heard the name of Harvey Landrum could find justification for condemning him as weak, his soul would blush for it. They might say he was an evil man, a wicked man, a strange man: but they should never say that he was a weak man. He wanted all men to account him strong. By God, he would show all men his strength!

He speculated on how he might make his initial advance upon Eleanor.

CHAPTER X

I

WILLIAM SIMMONS bore the invitation from Eleanor to Harvey; it was really a request, but he accounted it an invitation. She wanted him to have a principal part in the dramatic performance they were arranging for the proposed home for crippled children. As the request was relayed, she did not want him to *take* a part . . . she wanted him to *have* a part in the play. When Simmons submitted the invitation with diffident laughter, certain that Harvey would decline, and decline with an expletive added to his "NO!" he was surprised, for Harvey was unusually mild in his refusal to participate.

"No," he said simply, "tell her I appreciate her making the suggestion, but I never take part in such things."

II

He received a note from Eleanor by the afternoon mail.

She wrote:

"*My Dear Mr. Landrum:*

"Since you have so graciously donated us newspaper space for the little benefit play, I am about to presume upon your kindness and ask you to be of further assistance.

"I want you, as a special favor to me, to be in the play. There is a part which suits you to perfection. You already know that we are to present 'H. M. S. Pinafore,' the comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan; well, I want you to sing the part of The Very First Lord of the Admiraltee. The rôle requires a powerful bass, and I have been told by Mrs. Williams, who used to teach singing in the High School, that your voice is distinctly strong and of good quality.

"Will you help me out by taking the part?

"You know, of course, that the cause for which the play is being presented is a worthy one. We want to build here in Jackson a home for crippled children. There are very many children in this section of the State (even right here in Jackson) who are at great disadvantages among other children because of lameness of one sort or another. The institution we plan to establish would attend to the curing of those who can be cured, and would strive to prepare all of them to do that in life which they could best do. But there is no need to tell you of all this; you already know the purpose of our project.

"You might write me a note if you are willing to do this for me.

"Yours very sincerely,
"ELEANOR WITHERSPOON."

Harvey pondered for a long time over the missive. He wanted very much to accept the invitation; but he quailed at the prospect of getting up before a crowd, wearing funny clothes before people who knew him, exposing his ugliness to some who might not know him.

He chewed his pencil, and wondered if there were any way he might decline to serve, and at the same time leave an opening through which he might establish a relationship with Eleanor.

He concluded there was no way, and was becoming a trifle tragically sentimental about it when he suddenly thought of Mattie. His sentimentality shifted to his contemplation of her sad condition. He thought of her warped body, and then tried to imagine her as she might have grown to be had her body not been so unfortunately diverted from its normal development. He succeeded only in seeing her as almost identical with Eleanor . . . strong, beautiful, dominant. He almost wept. He thought: "Oh, if my poor, sweet Mattie had only had surgical attention when she was a child! She might have

been cured and spared the agony and bafflement and futility that has been her share of life."

He composed himself then and wrote a brief letter to Eleanor, telling her that he would be in the play.

He could not wait for the slow efficiency of the postal service. He summoned William Simmons and directed him to deliver the note at once. William was eager to comply.

CHAPTER XI

I

THE first rehearsal came on an evening in the next week. It was with diffidence that Harvey, cast as the Right Honorable Sir Joseph Porter, K. C. B., First Lord of the Admiralty, read the lines assigned to him. He liked his pompous entitlements, "the Right Honorable Sir," and "K. C. B.," although he had not the vaguest idea what the initials connoted.

His fear was that the lines might make him ridiculous, that the part for which he was cast might prove to be beneath his dignity.

He approached Mrs. Williams, the teacher of music in the high school, who was directing the performance.

"Say, Mrs. Williams, what sort of uniform am I to wear?"

"A wonderful uniform," she said enthusiastically, "gold braid, brass buttons, a beautiful cocked hat."

He grinned with pleasure.

"That's fine," he said.

There was no singing at the first rehearsal.

At the second rehearsal all the persons of the play sat in a circle . . . the meeting was held in Egbert Turpin's parlor . . . and, after definite assignments had been made, each one read his lines aloud.

Mrs. Williams stood in the center. When the lyrics broke into the polylogue, she took them in turn and sang them for the sake of instruction. After she would sing them over three or four times, the play-character would attempt it.

Harvey stood and bore down with all his might:

"I am the monarch of the sea,
The Ruler of the Queen's Navee,
Whose praise Great Britain loudly chants."

His chest was thrust out as if he really meant it. William Simmons, in the rôle of the gallant Captain, observed how Sir Joseph was contorting his mouth as he bellowed. William laughed. Harvey saw him, and understood the laugh to be of appreciation. He beamed.

Marian Turpin, who had the part of Hebe, chimed in:

"And so do his sisters and his cousins and his aunts."

Then, all the relatives:

"And so do his sisters and his cousins and his aunts."

Harvey resumed with increased fervor:

"When at anchor here I ride,
My bosom swells with pride,
And I snap my fingers at a foeman's taunts."

He sang the next portion with diminishing gusto:

"But when the breezes blow,
I generally go below,
And seek the seclusion that a cabin grants."

Cousin Hebe began:

"And so do——"

Harvey interrupted.

"Just a minute," he said heavily to Mrs. Williams.

Cousin Hebe became silent.

"Is this thing subject to change?" he questioned.

"Why, yes, I suppose we could change it if there were any good reason to change it. What have you in mind?"

"Well," Harvey said slowly, "I don't particularly like the reference to Great Britain. It seems to me we ought to change that to America."

Eleanor spoke up.

"That's absurd," she said, "why, if we did that you could not be Sir Joseph."

"That's true," Harvey assented, "I guess we'll have to let that part stay as it is.

"But I think that part where Sir Joseph, K. C. B., is supposed to sing that he goes below when the wind is up—I think that's sort of out of keeping with his character, don't you think so, Mrs. Williams?"

"No, I think that *is* his character."

"But it isn't," Harvey insisted. "He's a big man, and he runs things; and a First Lord of the Admiralty certainly wouldn't be afraid of a little gust of wind."

"That's just the point," Mrs. Williams held, "It's satire."

"Oh," replied Harvey, and then to himself: "I wish I hadn't got mixed up in this thing."

"Now, Mr. Landrum," said Mrs. Williams, "You have some more singing. I'll show you how the first stanza runs. The same tune carries through the rest of the lyric."

She lifted her hand high and brought it down with a gentle motion as she stepped away into:

"When I was a lad I served a term
As office boy to an attorney's firm.
I cleaned the windows and I swept the floor,
And I polished up the handle of the big front door.
I polished up the handle so carefullee
That now I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee!"

William Simmons winked playfully at Eleanor, and remarked:

"That song bears out Harvey's contention that America ought to be substituted for Great Britain."

"Certainly it does!" Harvey blustered.

II

William was cast as the Captain. Egbert Turpin was Ralph Rackstraw.

Eleanor Witherspoon was in the rôle of Josephine, the Captain's lovely daughter, desired by Sir Joseph but in love with Ralph.

Through all the tedious period of rehearsals, the fact that Josephine . . . Eleanor . . . was destined to be won by Ralph, was resented by Harvey. He even resented the complex dénouement, wherein it turns out that Ralph is a high-born gentleman and the rightful Captain. He felt, somehow, overshadowed.

But that was the way the play was written, and

Mrs. Williams seemed determined to preserve its integrity.

There was one bit of dialogue that Harvey gloried in. It was between Sir Joseph and the Captain . . . Harvey and William Simmons.

Sir Joseph is examining the skipper with regard to his conduct toward the crew:

"*Sir Joseph* . . . No bullying, I trust—no strong language of any kind, eh?"

"*Captain* . . . Oh, never, Sir Joseph."

"*Sir Joseph* . . . What, *never?*"

"*Captain* (meekly) . . . Hardly ever, Sir Joseph."

Harvey's second question in this bit was his climax. Instead of asking, "What, *never?*" he chose to put it, "*What,* NEVER?"

The question never failed to startle William.

III

Eleanor was an admirable Josephine. She was the ideal type for the part . . . dark hair, clear-cut and strong features, slim and graceful body, a mellow yet penetrating speaking voice, a sweet, strong singing voice.

When, during rehearsals at the opera house, Josephine would sing the scene with Ralph:

"Refrain, audacious tar,
Your suit from pressing,
Remember what you are
And whom addressing!
Proud lords to seek my hand
In throngs assemble,
The loftiest in the land
Bow down and tremble!"

Harvey would get a positive thrill from it.

IV

"That man is a wonderful actor," said Mrs. Williams, pointing to Harvey.

"He's fine!" said Eleanor, admiringly. I knew he would be. He does everything well."

The day was the final rehearsal day, the afternoon before the presentation.

The scene in which Harvey was employed at the moment was that in which Sir Joseph orders Ralph Rackstraw to the dungeon. The line he was reciting at the moment was:

"Insolent sailor, you shall repent this outrage. Seize him!"

But this was by no means Harvey's best scene. Later in the play, after Ralph has become the Captain and the Captain has become Ralph and Sir Joseph has resigned himself to marriage with Cousin Hebe, Harvey was taking his resignation

with such apparent bad grace that Mrs. Williams, Eleanor, Marian Turpin, William Simmons and all agreed that he was the finest amateur actor . . . especially in musical pieces . . . that Jackson had ever been privileged to claim as a native.

At the end of the final rehearsal, which was a dress rehearsal, Mrs. Williams said to Harvey:

"Mr. Landrum, you're wonderful—simply wonderful. You ought to go on the stage."

Harvey thrust forward his brass buttons until the buttonholes creaked.

"I may take a shot at it sometime," he said.

V

The play that night was a huge success. The box office receipts assured the building of an adequate home for Jackson's crippled children.

The review of the play published in the next day's *Jacksonian* follows:

"The presentation at the opera house last night of the Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera, 'H. M. S. Pinafore,' or 'The Lass That Loved a Sailor,' was an unqualified success. Not only was it a success from a financial standpoint, but as a work of art it displayed the fact that Jackson is rich in histrionic and operatic talent. The production was directed and staged by Mrs. Matilda Williams, the popular and able music teacher of Jackson High School. Mrs. Williams deserves the

highest commendation for her efficient efforts, and it is to be hoped that this is not the last play she will produce with local talent as her working material.

"The portrayal of the rôle of Sir Joseph Porter, K. C. B., First Lord of the Admiralty, by Harvey Landrum, who, we are proud to say, is *The Jacksonian's* city editor, was admirable. Mr. Landrum would have a brilliant future on the stage if he should undertake to make a conquest in that field of endeavor, which, of course, he is not likely to do, since his quick rise and early success in a more dignified field is portentous of his continuance as an editor. His powerful bass voice astonished his fellow-townspeople last night, as it had not been generally suspected that Mr. Landrum professed singing as one of his talents. It must be added that his histrionic ability is on a par with his voice.

"Miss Eleanor Witherspoon, daughter of Judge Witherspoon, was more than pleasing in the part of Josephine, daughter of the Captain, which character was extremely well taken by William Simmons, a member of the staff of *The Jacksonian.* Miss Witherspoon, one of Jackson's most beautiful and talented young ladies, showed acting abilities far above the ordinary, and sang with a clear soprano voice.

"The part of Ralph Rackstraw was admirably well portrayed by Egbert Turpin, son of Mr. George Turpin, president of the cotton mills, who is one of Jackson's leading citizens. Mr. Turpin's daughter, Marian, was in the rôle of Cousin Hebe. She, too, is deserving of high praise."

There followed, then, polite mentioning of the names of all who participated.

VI

Harvey was exultant. He had never been praised before for anything. Mattie had commended him at times, for various little things, but this was so different, and so much bigger.

Now everybody in town must know him. They would probably point him out as he moved through the streets.

Why, if it had not been for him the show would not have been a success! He was positive of that.

He could advance upon Eleanor Witherspoon now. And win her, too. Certainly he could. Why not? He'd like to hear somebody try to tell him why not!

CHAPTER XII

I

HARVEY, Eleanor and old Judge Witherspoon sat on the porch of the Witherspoon home the night after the play.

"Yes, sir." The Judge was talking. "You've got a fine voice. It's just tremendous. I don't think I ever heard a richer bass in all my life. It was a fine show, Mr. Landrum, and I think you, as the swaggering, bullying First Lord of the Admiralty, made it what it was . . . although I do think my charming Josephine here was mighty sweet."

"I enjoyed being in it," Harvey said, "I guess it's the only sort of rôle I could play."

"You might try Romeo sometime," Eleanor offered, banteringly.

"Hardly," Harvey rejoined, "I have no gift for pretty speeches. And, you see I'm a little out of practice in expressing myself aptly; if I had remained a reporter I might be able to speak fluently without experience."

"Yes?" She wondered at his random driving.

"I understand that reporters are eloquent wooers: is it true?"

She laughed.

"Oh, you mean Joe Vardon and William Simmons. They're simple."

"Eleanor!" her father reproved.

"I mean by that," she amended, "that neither one of them adds much to the fame of the reporter as a Don Juan. Or, I'd better say, both of them together . . . they always come together."

"They're very bright boys," said Harvey.

"Yes. Bright. Joe says out of a clear sky: 'Eleanor, my precious, marry me and I will be your everlasting slave—my fairy purse will always be filled for you, filled with good fortune as my heart is filled with love this instant.' And William, taking his cue, picks up a mock heroic posture and declaims: 'Hear him not, O Princess of my heart; choose me and thou shalt thrive and grow fat on ham and eggs and pot cheese and onions and rich tenderness. Wilt thou?'

"I laugh at them, of course. It's the polite thing to do. But sometimes I wonder if they are not such cowards that they have to pretend they are joking in order to get around facing a refusal."

"Eleanor!" the old Judge rebuked. "You know perfectly well that they are joking."

"It certainly looks that way sometimes," she said, arching her brows drolly.

Harvey laughed.

II

"Very queer fellow," Judge Witherspoon remarked to his daughter a moment after Harvey had left. "Pity he's such a sight to look at. I understand he's got a lot of brains, too. I heard a day or so ago that Oliver Wakefield's planning to confine himself to the writing of his editorials and make Landrum managing editor."

"I like him," Eleanor said, and shivered a little as if with the chill.

"I understand he calls himself an atheist," her father continued, "but he'll get over that when he gets older."

"I'm going to talk to him about that," she said.

"You ought not to have said that about Joe and William. They're nice boys. You know he's their boss, and it won't do them any good for him to hear you making such fun of them."

"Well, they're so sickening. And all the rest of them are. I think the reason this man fas-

cinates me so is because he's so ugly and inelegant and unclever."

"Fascinates you?"

"Yes. He positively does." She blurted the words forth as if it were a confession that lifted a blot from her soul. "He does fascinate me."

"You're a funny girl," the Judge said.

"No, I'm not. I'm just exasperated. That's all. There's William and Joe; they *are* simple. Then, there's Tom Sims. He whimpers and says he loves me humbly and will be at my feet until his last weak breath is drawn. I feel like kicking him. And Egbert Turpin . . . Egbert tries to look blasé, manages really to look sleepy, and remarks casually that he has known wonderful women, women of the world, demure, naïve girls, and daughters of royalty and millions . . . and yet he prefers me for some reason. Isn't that romantic? He looks so blasé that I have to yawn in his face."

Perhaps she had good reason for being exasperated with her suitors. Joe and William were of the bantering sort . . . so meagerly confident of themselves that they resorted to such subterfuges as accompliceship, raillery and ambiguous seriousness. It is certain that either of them, had he been given the least hint of encouragement from her lips, or had he noticed the slightest tinge

of preference for himself over the other, would have broken their high bond of friendship, sold the honor of a man for the favor of a woman. But there lay little hope in the heart of either that he would ever have such an opportunity for treason. For she played Joe against William as a billiard player plays one ball against the other, and neither of them had any greater chance to take the offensive in this triangular situation than has one of the table balls to turn against the cue ball.

Tom Sims, who lived next door to Eleanor, had been her childhood sweetheart; and he still loved her with a childish faith that she would return to her old love and see him for the faithful dog he had always been, and reward him for his faith. But she laughed at him, thought him a spineless thing with his pleadings and his humility, declared she would not have him for a doormat, told him that the man she should eventually choose would be a masterful man who would take her in spite of herself.

It did seem, though, since Eleanor was something of a prig and a self-conscious aristocrat, that Egbert Turpin, whose father was president of the cotton mills and whose mother set the social standard . . . who himself had been educated in the East, and who had traveled in Europe . . .

it did seem that Eleanor should have fallen in love with Egbert, only in order to be consistent with her own character. But she did not fall in love with him. She positively refused to do so, grounding herself with the consciousness that she despised his assumptious cleverness, his sophistical pretensions and his declarations of himself in roundabout and wary ways.

Eleanor was an intelligent woman, and it is no wonder that spinsterhood, under such social influences, in such a vapid situation, irked her day and night.

CHAPTER XIII

I

"LET'S just start out walking, and end up where we end up," Eleanor suggested to him one evening in late June, when the town was stifling-hot and the fireflies seemed to be hot sparks in the quiet wind.

"Do what?" Harvey questioned, listlessly.

"Just start walking, without any place in particular in mind, and stop where it seems pleasant. I call it ramshackling."

"Ramshackling?"

"Yes."

"All right, let's ramshackle."

They set out down the street together, walking somewhat aimlessly like idle children following a whim. The darkness came and found them strolling in Highland Park, a mile from their starting point, and with no word passing between them.

After a while she said:

"Let's sit down somewhere and rest. I'm a little tired."

He led her to a bench at the margin of the lake and they sat down side by side. They were quiet for a long time then. The whole world was quiet. There was no breeze in the air. The whistle of a train far away accentuated the quietness. At their feet the mirrored moon was as moveless as if it were a real, dead thing. There was no sound but that of human breath . . . no movement but that of human breasts.

Harvey was terribly conscious of her nearness to him. He had touched her arm as they had sat down, and he had come near to crying out in his emotion.

"It's so awfully hot," she broke the silence.

"It is hot." His powerful voice quivered.

He moved his hand and touched the sleeve of her dress, and quickly withdrew his hand to clasp it with the other and press them together tightly. He wanted to take her in his arms and crush her slim body against him; his whole impulse directed him to clasp her until her breath should come in hot gusts . . . and his arms stretched out in the darkness to obey. But he could not. It were weakness to yield, he thought. He must restrain himself. Not to restrain himself would be to grant that he was weaker than his emotion. For in his reasonable mind he saw that it would be cowardice to overwhelm her so.

But his specter of weakness . . . hanging over him every hour of his conscious life . . . was a strange power.

Suddenly it occurred to his mind that to do otherwise than take her in his arms were weakness. He thought that she, perhaps, felt safety in his presence in the conviction that he was not a forward man.

The cave man was strong, he reasoned. Strength is primitive. The primitive is strength. He wanted to feel her soft body against his breast. He wanted to feel her warm breath in his face.

His mind was made up and he reached his arms out again. But again some strange guidance prevented him. He could not so prefix his mind that he could enforce himself to this action. He did not know why. It was a strange situation in its entirety.

It came to him then that he was weak. That he was not strong enough to fulfill his purpose. He would. He would. Nothing but a stroke from heaven could prevent him.

With an intake of breath that amounted to a cry he drew her pliant body to him. For a moment she resisted, tensing her muscles to struggle inadequately, lifting her hands to press against his face. But he was so strong, and she so weak.

She realized how useless her resistance was. And she felt a moment's comfort, a moment's ecstasy even. She relaxed and lifted her face.

"Oh, Harvey!" she murmured.

He kissed her fiercely.

She must have loved him then . . . if not with a reflective love, at any rate with such a love as woman feels when she yields to a strong man.

But Harvey grew cold. As he held her there, caressing her slim, smooth body, a great wave of disappointment, of dejection, came over him. At the moment of his conquest he had come to a point of glory in his love; but it had fallen.

His arms grew limp. She sat away from him. They were quiet. He reached down and picked up a little clod of earth; he broke it into bits and pitched them into the lake to hear their feeble splatters. She sighed heavily.

"Harvey." She spoke his name tenderly.

"What?"

"That was wrong."

"No, it wasn't. It was all right since we are going to be married."

That set her reflective mind to action.

"Married?" she asked herself. "Married to this man?" She turned her head quickly toward him to look at his face, but the darkness intervened, and she could not see. But she could re-

member: she saw in her imaginative mind the picture of him . . . his short chinless jaw, and vapid lips, and great crooked nose, and thin, red skin. She shuddered.

Then she was afraid, and she moved away from him with a shrinking movement.

"No-o-o; I can't," she quavered; her voice broke and she buried her face in her arms and sobbed.

Harvey looked toward her, astonished and a little frightened. He did not know what to do. How should he? He had seen Mattie cry, but his response to that had always been to leave her presence. He could not leave Eleanor out here in Highland Park, a mile from home.

"Don't cry," he ordered, and his voice was stern.

Her sobs increased in volume.

He reached out his great hands and caught her shoulders, turning her to face him. Her sobs stopped; it seemed that she ceased breathing.

"Don't cry," he said, "I tell you we're going to marry."

"O-oh!" she quailed, and tried to draw away from him, but he drew her nearer and caught her in his arms while she struggled furiously. He was not gentle now, but was pressing her to him with a willful pressure, and she was resisting him

with all her power. He placed his hand upon her head and forced it back until her face was near his face; and then he kissed her harshly, and she did not respond.

"You're hurting me," she cried. "I hate you! I hate you."

He released her in his astonishment, and she sprang to her feet and ran heedlessly through the darkness. Her direction was toward the road.

He sat there in stupefaction for a minute; then he arose and followed dazedly.

When he reached the road he saw her under the light a little distance ahead of him, walking rapidly toward town and home. He increased his pace, and soon was so near behind her that she could hear his foot-steps. She increased her stride, and he modified his to maintain a distance of about ten yards.

He was thinking: she will tell her father, he will be furious and may call me to account. What shall I do? what can I do?

He was desperately frightened.

"Eleanor!" he called.

She stopped in her tracks and turned about. She stood under a light, and he saw that her face was livid.

"Don't speak to me, you—you creature!" she

said. "Don't come near me. What do you mean by following me? Go away." She turned and resumed her journey up the street.

He followed after her, doggedly. His heart was heavy. He was powerfully ashamed of himself. He was terribly afraid of the consequences. He loved her mightily.

She did not turn around again. But she heard his persistent foot-steps behind her, and the sound of them gave her comfort in the dark places along the way. After a while it occurred to her that he was following her to accompany her . . . that he was protecting her . . . and her heart softened somewhat. The thought came that here was a new sort of stark romance in her mild, artificial life, and she smiled feebly to herself. She thought then that he was not so frightfully abhorrent . . . he was strong, at least. She remembered how his first crushing embrace had thrilled her. She felt a little proud of him, and was glad he was near-by. He was so strong . . . and so comforting. And it was chivalrous of him to follow along to protect her . . . and considerate of him not to press his immediate attendance upon her. She felt for an instant like a lady of an old day, who made a journey through a perilous country, accompanied by a brave knight who followed at respectful distance

to protect her. She was impelled to stop and wait for him, but her pride was too great for that. She continued alone. But her heart was glowing more warmly and her eyes shining with a gentler light than that of anger.

Harvey was following on, with mechanical stride, despising himself at every step. What tangle had he got himself into now? She would be certain to tell her father, and that would be embarrassing . . . to say the least. And he had lost Eleanor; so much was certain. And more: he had lost all hope of ever gaining a woman for himself. He could never prove his strength in this direction, for, he confessed, he could never again face the ordeal of a courtship. If only he could stop her and talk to her, humbly ask her forgiveness, plead with her, beg her to make no report to her father! He was on the point of calling her name, but his voice would not come.

Maybe Mattie would hear of it! Oh, God! He couldn't bear that. She'd want to pray over him again.

Once he quickened his pace and almost came up with Eleanor, but she heard the increasing foot-steps and moved the faster. He had not been able to assemble the final coördination of mind and muscle necessary to place him at her side.

His anxiety increased to desperation as she came near to her home. His knees were trembling, and his lips were moving in the formation of an imprecatory word, over and over, directed to himself.

She turned into her front gate.

He stopped as if stunned, his hand on the gate that had swung shut before him, and could not move farther.

"Eleanor!" his voice broke forth pleadingly.

She smiled coquettishly to herself and shut the door behind her.

"Fool! Weakling!" he addressed himself, and tears came down his face.

He stood there until her light went out. Then he walked unsteadily toward his home.

II

When Eleanor entered the sitting room the old Judge was reading a magazine.

"Your young man seems to have left kind of early," he commented.

"Yes. He's had a hard day at the office and was a little tired," she said.

CHAPTER XIV

I

AS he went home that night by way of lonely streets he was on the verge of tears. His pity for himself had reached its height; he had never known the instant in the past when he was so discouraged and dejected. There was no doubt: he had failed in his purpose to win Eleanor, and it was an irredeemable failure. Here was one victory that was not to be his . . . that he could not flaunt as evidence of strength. Rather, his failure had proved his weakness emphatically. He had grown to suspect that he was strong. But now he knew that he was not, that he was all that his failing chin implied.

That were enough to overwhelm him with self-pity . . . just that consideration of his natural state . . . but the failure that hurt him with a deep pain was quite another thing. He knew that he loved her tenderly and powerfully and wonderfully . . . that her love for him would be worth more than the name for the greatest strength among men. And he had lost all hope

of ever attaining her love. But had he not been too ambitious, too presumptuous? It was presumption surely . . . that he had thought she might love him—she, of all women, love him, of all men.

Self-pity was inevitable.

That night he cried salt tears in his pillow.

II

At the office of *The Jacksonian* the next day, Harvey was distinctly not himself. His loud voice was not calling and commanding. He was quiet and apparently sulky. Moreover, he was extremely nervous.

Every moment he expected a call from Judge Witherspoon . . . or, if not Judge Witherspoon, then old Wakefield. He thought it likely that Judge Witherspoon would come to old Wakefield with a suggestion that he be dealt with from that quarter . . . for he was quite aware that moral dereliction was ground enough for judgment from any point of view.

Suppose old Wakefield should discharge him. That was a terrible thought. It was a wonder it had not occurred to him before. It had never worried him. He had not believed the old man had courage enough to dismiss him. He remembered that he had started once to discharge him

. . . on Dr. Fox's recommendation . . . but that he had managed somehow to keep his place, and even to get more salary out of it. But now the picture of old Wakefield discharging him was very vivid. And suppose he should. What would he do? He'd hate to have to start out in some other business and go through the whole process all over again . . . the process of proving to a new community that he was the strongest of men. And it would amount to that if he were to be discharged from the service of *The Jacksonian,* for there was no other newspaper in town.

But he could go out of town, get a position on a newspaper in another city . . . perhaps a better position than he held now. He had been offered a place once by the publisher of *The Nashville Leader;* maybe the place was still open. He'd write and ask about it. No, he'd do more than that: he'd take a day or two off and go to Nashville.

III

When Harvey got back from Nashville he found a note at the office from Eleanor. He was astonished, but so pleased by it that he sat down at his desk and laughed aloud as he read it through a second time. It was short and to the point:

"*My dear Harvey:*

"You have my powder and puff. It's the little round box you put in your brown coat pocket the night we went ramshackling. You remember the night, perhaps. Well, do me the kindness to bring my powder box back.

"Yours as ever,

"Eleanor Witherspoon."

The order was specifically that he bring the box back. She did not say to send it back. But he did send it. For some unaccountable reason he sent it back by William Simmons the next day and sent a little note with it: "Too ill to come personally; wasting away with love."

William brought back the answering note: "Another case of Erosion I suspect."

IV

Emma Rainey's party came two weeks afterward. Harvey was invited and was asked to escort Eleanor. It must have been at the instigation of Eleanor herself, for there was no reason for Emma's inviting Harvey to her party at all. But he was invited, and he made his plans accordingly.

V

She was glad to see him when she met him at the door. He could see clearly that she was, and his confidence was reëstablished by her smile.

He had a taxicab at the door, and after they were comfortably seated in it he said to her in the lowest voice that he could employ and yet be audible:

"Eleanor, we're going to get married after the party to-night. I've got the license in my pocket."

Her reply was a gasp and astonished relaxation.

"You've what?" she managed to say at last.

"I've got the license; we're going to be married," he repeated.

"But I can't. I can't. No! No!" She was casting about for something rational to say in denial.

He laughed with grim humor.

"Can't you?"

"No. I had planned to have a big church wedding, with cathedral candlesticks and everything."

This time he laughed with straightforward humor.

"Well, it's too bad you can't have them."

"But I will have them," she said with spirit. "You can't run off with me against my will. I have no intention of marrying you—now. Why, I haven't even any clothes."

"I don't mind that," he said. "After the ceremony we can stop by your house and you can go in quietly, without waking anybody, to get a few garments in a suit-case. We're going to Nashville on the one o'clock train. I have the tickets and Pullmans here."

"You didn't make any preparations at all, did you?" she said ironically. "You must not have thought anybody'd go with you. Now how would you feel, Mr. Cocksure, if nobody would?"

"I should be very disappointed and very unhappy," he told her.

They were quiet for the remainder of the journey.

Harvey enjoyed the party far more than he had anticipated. He was requested by Emma Rainey to sing one of the scores he had in "Pinafore," and he gloried in acceding. Then he talked as gaily as he could to such persons as he came in touch with, until at last refreshments came, and after that, disassembly.

Eugene White, a tall, slender youth . . . of the sapling type . . . had been drifting about

the scene of the party all the evening, somewhat unanchored since he had come as a rover, a stag, a singleton or whatever it is that comes alone to a party.

Just as the affair was in the first stages of disintegration, Harvey heard Eleanor say to White:

"You must see me home, Mr. White; I am here without an escort."

"Certainly, Miss Witherspoon; I am honored," he had replied.

Harvey wondered whether she had not spoken so that he might hear.

They started toward the gate together, Eleanor and this Eugene White. She had not directed her eyes to right nor left in search of Harvey. But had she directed her eyes to the left as she and this Eugene White sauntered down the front walk that led to the front gate she must have seen him.

Just as the gate was opening to let Eleanor march through, Harvey stepped forward and hit Mr. White a terrific cuff on the point of the chin. Mr. White toppled and fell from a great height. Harvey lifted Eleanor in his arms and looked about for a taxicab he had assigned to be near-by at that time. He could not find it; but almost directly before his eyes was the bright blue, sport-model touring car that belonged to

Egbert Turpin. Moreover, Egbert was sitting at the wheel, and beside him was William Simmons.

Harvey called to Simmons to open the rear door, and proceeded to place Eleanor carefully in the seat. Then he got in beside her.

"Drive home as fast as you can, Egbert; for the Lord's sake, drive home! Don't stop anywhere. He says he's going to marry me. Don't let him do it." Her voice was almost calm. Only the words she spoke and the brightness of her eyes were indicative of the state of excitement which should have held her.

"Marry you?" Egbert questioned dazedly, "You? That man marry you?"

"Yes. I'm going to marry her, and within the next ten minutes. And you are going to be my witnesses—you and Simmons," Harvey thundered.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed William, and grasped his hair on the sides of his head with both hands.

"We'll see whether you marry her or not," Turpin said resolutely.

The starter buzzed efficiently, the clutch caught hold and the car moved down the street.

"Stop at 875 Wharton Street; that's where Dr. Keble lives . . . two doors down from the Presbyterian Church."

"I will—like hell!" snarled Turpin, and the momentum of his car increased.

Harvey reached over and caught him by the back of the neck with a hand that almost completed the circle.

"I'll twist it off unless you do as I tell you."

Turpin changed his course.

Five minutes later Dr. Keble droned:

"Eleanor, will you take this man——"

"I will," she answered clearly, calmly, almost defiantly.

CHAPTER XV

I

THE Pullman porter jerked at Eleanor's blanket.

"Wake up!" he called. "You've got to be out of the car by half past seven."

He had no need to call her. She had not been asleep. All the night long she had lain there, heedless of the car-wheels' siren lure to the drowsy, thinking, thinking, thinking. What a tremendous thing she had done, and how, through the night, she had repented and been glad by turns! There had been no end of tears, and yet she had had moments of happiness and pride . . . happiness in having been won by conquest, pride in a strong man.

The present day was a thrilling anticipation to her. She went to the dressing compartment in a tension of excitement.

When she came out, dressed and ready for the morning, bright-eyed and powdered, rouge-cheeked and radiant, Harvey looked at her lovely freshness and thought:

"Good God! Could she have slept all night?"

He wondered then if her eyes saw him as haggard as he felt; and the thought nettled him, for perhaps it was an initial victory for her.

"Good morning, Harvey," she said calmly.

"I've been waiting twenty minutes," he replied.

She stepped back as though he had delivered her a blow.

II

The streets of Nashville were filled with sheeted rain as they drove in a flaming yellow taxicab toward the Hermitage Hotel, where they were to stay for a day or two . . . until they should find more permanent apartments.

He did not speak a word to her along the way, and she had no word to say to him.

She stood at the desk in the lobby and watched him scrawl in his immature hand:

"Harvey Landrum & wife."

She fought to suppress tears, and her throat came near to bursting. She did not know just why, but she thought she would have been much happier if he had only written:

"Mr. & Mrs. Harvey Landrum."

III

They sat at breakfast. Eleanor looked out the window at the dim, rain-taken world. Her spirit was as gloomy as that, she reflected.

Harvey studied the menu assiduously. Then he turned his eyes to look at her. His face relaxed and he was tender:

"Do you want fruit or cereal, dear?"

Her face brightened and she answered eagerly:

"Oh, Harvey! I'd love a cereal."

Life had grown sweeter for her instantly. She knew she loved him then, and it was better because she had been so doubtful of it.

The barrier had fallen. Now she could talk with him about the little, familiar things of husbands and wives.

"I hate weather like this," she began with nervous liveliness; "but I'm glad we're here, and I'm glad to-day is to-day. I'm just glad, Harvey. Aren't you?"

He looked at her stupidly, and she felt silly. Her words and sentences re-formed themselves in her mind, and she saw how disorganized and intangible they were. Defensively, she turned her speech to topics of more substance.

"When do you begin work?" she inquired.

"To-day."

"Oh, I wish we had about a week just to be together, by ourselves, without anything to think about except ourselves and each other."

"That would be nice," he conceded.

It came to her as a tremendous concession from him.

She leaned across the table; her eyes were very shiny as she looked at him.

"Oh, Harvey," she said, "can't we have a honeymoon . . . just a little one?" Her voice was pleading.

Harvey looked up to answer her. He saw the waiter standing behind her. His face flushed in embarrassment.

"Oatmeal, bacon and eggs and coffee for two," he said sternly.

The waiter had interceded for him, and Harvey was relieved. But his relief was passing, for Eleanor was persistent.

The waiter had turned and gone to that far place where waiters go.

"Harvey, do you love me? You have never told me you loved me. Tell me now. You've never told me. Do you?"

He saw her in a haze before him. He wondered if the mists before his eyes were becoming tears. Weep before her? Never that. If he

were to weep, then she would know herself for the stronger . . . know him for the weaker. He was conscious of the old vacuous sensation . . . almost a sensation of physical weakness: the same feeling that he had had before a fight in every instance. He speculated on its meaning in this case, whether it was fright, or love for Eleanor, or weakness. He looked downward and heard her voice as if it were far away:

"Tell me, Harvey."

He lifted his head and looked out of the window.

"I married you because I love you," he said in a voice that was almost tense enough to break.

IV

Two hours later, Eleanor sat alone in their room. She had bought a magazine and had started a story in it, but her mind was drawn from the story to contemplation of recent events in her life . . . to speculation on the character of her husband . . . this strange mixture of a man who could speak irritably to her in answer to a bright "Good-morning" before their wedding breakfast, come almost to tears a few minutes later in asserting his love, then, leaving for the day's work, kiss her with brutelike ferocity and stop her breath with his monstrous

embrace. She smiled a little as she reflected on the precipitate wedding, and laughed a little as she thought of the drama of it . . . the melodrama of it . . . his forcing Egbert Turpin and William Simmons to act as witnesses. He was strong, she knew; and she wanted strength. He was a man, a manful man; every inch of him was a full expression of anabolism. He was one whom men feared, and she was well convinced that she should fear him . . . fear the commands of his heavy voice, and hasten to obey them; fear his displeasure; fear his desire and yield to it in an ecstasy of fear. Oh, she loved him; never a doubt of that. He was her man, and she was proud of him because of that if because of nothing else. There were few such men in this soft time, she thought. She was glad he would not be the soft-voiced, solicitous, baby-nursing type. After all, husbandhood, or husbandship, or whatever you'd call it, had come to be a sort of servile office . . . constant deference to the wife, pleasant little acts to keep her in a proper humor, all sorts of gentle dealings and unmanly attentions. William Simmons, or any of the rest, would have been model. Fancy her Harvey directing a baby-carriage in the park on a summer afternoon! She laughed at that. It was too impossible, and absurd. Why, she

would not even dare suggest it to him. She was amused at the trend of her thoughts. And then, all of a sudden, she was not so amused. She was, rather, embarrassed. She wondered what he was doing now. Probably ordering somebody to do something. What was a managing editor's function, anyhow? She had a vague idea about a city editor, for Harvey had been that when she first knew him. Well, she'd be glad when they had a home of some sort. The hotel was too public. She wanted to be absolutely alone with him. The thought frightened her, brightened her eyes, thrilled her. She was so helpless before him. He was so strong. He could crush her into lifelessness, and she could only submit. He was so marvelously strong, and she so wonderfully weak. And the day was so long. It seemed that a day had never gone so slowly. If it would only stop raining she would go out shopping . . . although she had no money. Or to a picture show . . . she could get money enough for that from the hotel desk if she'd just tell the clerk that her husband had forgotten to leave her any, or that she'd mislaid her purse, or just that she wanted it . . . what business was it of his? That was a good idea. She would go to a picture show as soon as the rain slackened, and then, when the

picture show was ended and she was back again, Harvey would be almost ready to come home. Then they'd have dinner together . . . and then he'd tell her again . . . a second time . . . that he loved her, and take her in his arms.

CHAPTER XVI

I

THE process of settling down was a régime of tedium. Had the ultimate decision been left with Eleanor it would have been simple. But Harvey's word was the determining factor, and on account of that the discovery of a home was becoming something of a trial.

A week had passed over their wedlock now and they were still at the hotel. Harvey had said to her the second day:

"Eleanor, go out this morning and try to find an apartment. Two or three rooms, kitchen and bath. If you see one you like we'll go together to-night and look at it."

She had found one she liked and they had gone together to look at it. It was out beyond the university, on West End Avenue, overlooking Centennial Park from the height of its second-story windows, . . . and it was compact and cozy, with three rooms, a large bath and a real kitchen.

They went up the stairs behind a tightly-

corseted old woman whom Eleanor addressed as Mrs. Fain. While the introductory formula was being spoken, Mrs. Fain stared with obvious interest at Harvey.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Landrum," she acknowledged, "I'm glad you all are going to be our neighbors."

Harvey turned upon Eleanor with a mounting expression of antagonism in his face.

"Have you taken the apartment?" he queried in a tone of insolence.

"Well, practically." Eleanor was hesitant. "I told Mrs. Fain it was just about what we wanted and that we'd make a deposit to-night."

Harvey clicked his teeth together with a snap. He moved into the apartment, where Mrs. Fain had turned on the lights. He glanced at the gray wall paper in the bedroom, frowned at the arrangement of the shelves in the kitchen and turned to Eleanor with an air of triumphant disapproval.

"We don't want it," he said heavily, "it's nothing like what we want."

Mrs. Fain looked at him in astonishment.

"I'm sorry," she said, "I'm truly sorry. Mrs. Landrum seemed so enthusiastic . . . I thought——"

"Well," Harvey cut in disagreeably, "I

wouldn't live here rent-free: That's what I think about it."

Eleanor was obviously upset . . . perhaps not humiliated, certainly embarrassed. She stood looking at the polished floor, her face dull red. Maybe she was angry, but she remained silent. Mrs. Fain shot her a look of sympathy and perverted it to disgust as she turned her eyes on Harvey. Harvey said, "Let's go," and he and Eleanor clumped down the stairs and waited at the car tracks in front of a pie wagon.

They addressed each other in sulky monosyllables until bedtime.

The third day Eleanor had received no instructions, and so she had spent the hours with a magazine.

When Harvey had come home from the office, the first question had been:

"Well, did you find an apartment to-day?"

"No, I didn't look for one. I thought I'd better wait for you."

Harvey was pleased by her deference but it occurred to him that it would be more practical for her to do the finding and for him to do the deciding. Eleanor agreed.

"I'm not a millionaire yet," he had said, "and we can't afford to stay here at the hotel much longer."

And so on the fourth day Eleanor had gone out again, her enthusiasm tempered but still burning.

She examined several apartments that morning and found her zeal returning. It was amazing to her how absorbingly interesting was the business of seeking a home for one's self and husband. Curious! She had taken no interest in her father's home in Jackson. Ever since the death of her mother . . . which had been when she was a very little girl . . . an old Negress had superintended cooking and housekeeping. Then, rooms and articles of furniture had been objective, cold presences. Now, with her own home and this man to provide for, she was coming to think of skillets and pots with a mild passion; the idea of furniture now was the idea of herself and her furniture and Harvey, all somehow conglomerated into an accidental entity for her personal satisfaction.

This was a strange state of mind, she reflected —an inexplicable change from an old, unreal plane to a vivid new one . . . a complex one, too. It couldn't be explained in words. So many things promised to be just as they had been. That was portention enough of material happiness . . . money enough, clothes enough and food enough. But that in itself was no

change in her estate; that was no improvement. Money and clothes and food are, after all, self-sufficient; no more than money and clothes and food without relative qualities other than the having them or the lacking of them. She had had money and clothes and food from her father's purse, and the money had been as valid, the clothes as fine and the food as palatable. Marriage were sheer, aimless wandering if it amounted to merely that; it were polite visiting; a silly removal of person to no especial end. But it amounted to more than that, fortunately. There was a catalytic agent of some sort that made the new estate strange and vivid and wonderful.

"Love," Eleanor defined it, and the young college professor who sat across from her in the street car looked at her suddenly rosy face, and later lectured for an hour to his class in advanced geology on the more or less lost faculty of blushing.

She found an apartment that day which she liked, and again in the evening she and Harvey visited it. He was more reasonable this time, and as they walked together, arm in arm, through the little rooms, he approved of floors and ceilings, and in the kitchen, in front of the sink, he took Eleanor in his arms and kissed her.

"I think we'll love this," he said.

She took his hand and led him to the kitchen window. The moon was full, and a slate roof in the near distance glinted. Harvey looked down across the alley beneath the window and into an open yard beyond. The moon struck brightly on four or five white upright things.

"What's that?" He pointed.

"Oh, that's the most adorable little graveyard!" Eleanor replied.

Harvey stepped back from the window.

"I've always hated 'em," he said. "Let's go."

During the rest of the week, Eleanor sought but did not find. Harvey grumbled about expenses at the hotel, and tried to make Eleanor understand that she was to blame.

"If you don't find something to-day," he told her at the beginning of their second week, "I'm going out myself and find something."

That was intended for an ultimatum. Eleanor accepted it as one. Accordingly, when that afternoon she found an apartment almost as nice as the one over which Mrs. Fain had presided or the other with the adorable graveyard view from the kitchen window, she took affairs into her own hands and signed the lease. Then she went to a moving picture show.

At dinner she told him she had found an apartment.

"Fine," he said, "let's go and sign the lease. I can't stand it here much longer."

"I've already signed the lease."

Harvey's hands flew to the arms of his chair. He sat back and looked at her in alarm.

"You've already signed the lease?" he questioned slowly and tonelessly.

She nodded her head in affirmation.

"Yes, I got tired of riding on street cars."

Harvey was more annoyed now than he had been astonished.

"What if I don't like it?" he asked petulantly.

"Well, I'm afraid you'll have to like it since I've taken it. But I'm sure you will. Let's go and look at it after dinner."

He sucked in his lower lip and sulked. After a while he rejoined:

"Don't want to look at it."

Eleanor laughed.

"You're like a spoiled little boy," she said.

Harvey brooded over the rest of his dinner.

II

Harvey lay awake that night long after Eleanor had fallen asleep. And the next morning he did not sing from "Pinafore" while he shaved,

as he had sung every morning since their marriage. He was taciturn at breakfast, and he went away for the day's stint without conceding Eleanor a kiss.

For much of the time that day he was forgetful of a managing editor's authority, as he sat at his desk in worried thought. His speculation was upon Eleanor's high-handed assumption. He had no way of knowing whether she had expressed her own character without relation to a knowledge of his own quality, or whether she had acted upon consideration . . . understanding . . . of his defensively fictitious attitude. But he was afraid that her insight was naïvely keen.

At any rate, he had asserted himself after a fashion. He had made it clear to her that he was displeased. Perhaps that would close the situation. It would be just as well. He tried to dismiss his problem from his mind. He went into the city editor's province. He walked over to a desk where a reporter sat pecking at a typewriter. A hat and a cane were on the desk. Harvey bellowed:

"Are these things yours?"

"Why, yes!" the reporter admitted.

"Well, hang 'em up. What do you think that the hat rack's for?"

The reporter hung them up and Harvey strode back to his office.

The city editor winked at an office boy.

"Hot stuff!" the latter commented.

III

Harvey and Eleanor went to a vaudeville show that night. Harvey enjoyed it immensely. Eleanor had never seen him so hilariously unrestrained. He laughed at jokes as she had never heard him laugh. Always, theretofore, his laughter had had a note of scorn, but to-night it was pure and rich. She liked it. She thought she found in it the promise of a quality of humor which might make the years more smooth.

There was one feature that he liked better than the others: A monologist stood in the middle of the stage and talked at random; Harvey laughed at his stock witticisms. Then the performer told questionable jokes. Harvey laughed boisterously, and the persons in the seats near-by took the suggestion and laughed with him. Then the monologist told his best story.

"I was strolling through the colored district of Nashville yesterday," he began, "when I chanced to catch sight of a broad-beamed colored

woman standing on a door-step. One pickaninny was hanging to one side of her red skirt, another was on the other side, and all around her were pickaninnies of various shades of darkness. I stopped on a street-corner and counted them. There were eight, and the oldest appeared to be about six. I went up to her and asked:

" 'Auntie, are all these yours?'

" 'Yas, suh; all mine, ev'y last one of 'em," she replied.

" 'They're a fine-looking crowd,' I commented. 'What are their names?'

"She lined them up in stair-step formation and began with the tallest:

" 'Now, dis here one's named Joshua, and dis one's Jedges and dis one's 'Clesiastes; dis black one's Eczema, de nex' one's Romeo, dis here one's Abraham and dis one's Castoria. I done named de littles' one Opium.'

" 'Opium?' I inquired. 'That's a funny name. Why did you name the child Opium?'

" 'Wal, suh," she answered, 'I heard some white folks say dat Opium is what comes from a wild poppy, and if dey ever was a little nigger come from a wild poppy, dis here one sho' is dat little nigger.' "

Harvey laughed until the tears came.

The headline act was a strong man's exhibition of his strength. He bent an iron bar in his teeth and Harvey turned to Eleanor:

"Isn't that wonderful?" he said, and his eyes were shining as if with passion.

As they walked toward the hotel, Eleanor concluded that the time had come for her to speak to him of something that had been on her mind throughout the time of the performance. He was in high good humor and probably would be tractable, she reasoned.

"Harvey, how much can we afford to spend for furniture?" she questioned.

"I can pay for whatever we need," he said. "But don't bother about it now. We'll get it in a day or two."

She said nothing for three blocks. Then she said:

"Harvey, honey, I've already got it."

"Got what?"

"The furniture. I bought it to-day and it's to be delivered at the apartment to-morrow."

He halted with an involuntary constriction of muscles. Eleanor stopped two paces beyond and turned to face him.

"What?" she asked.

He sputtered with the beginning of a word,

a "Why" or a "What" or a "When," and then changed his sentence.

"I won't pay for it," he said, in a loud voice.

Eleanor drew herself to her complete height.

"Let's not have a public discussion of it," she said, coldly. "Wouldn't you prefer to explode in the privacy of our own room?"

She turned about and walked steadily towards the hotel.

He stood there for a moment and then began to follow. He increased his stride until he was by her side. He caught her arm and squeezed it gently. They were under the light of the hotel door. Eleanor looked up, and there was a hint of laughter in her eyes.

"Old Harvey," she said. "Funny old Harvey!" They both laughed.

CHAPTER XVII

I

THE apartment was in an old, remodeled building in Seventh Avenue, two blocks from the hotel.

Soon after Harvey left the hotel the next morning, Eleanor set out for their new home.

She and Harvey met at luncheon.

Harvey had put in a morning of thinking on the impendent state of domesticity, and, in view of the fact that he had devised neither tactics nor stratagem by which he might establish his own divine dominance over the realm of the hearthstone . . . the inevitability of his right to rule . . . his lunch-time disposition was not happy. As they sat facing each other in a clattering restaurant not far from the offices of *The Leader,* Harvey's brow was creased and his tone of voice was defiant. But Eleanor was radiantly enthusiastic, and his heaviness did not deter her.

"It's going to be lovely," she began. "The

furniture came this morning, and it fits into the rooms exactly as I saw it would.

"I had the gas turned on . . . and the electricity . . . and this afternoon I'm going to——"

She opened her purse and took out a scrap of paper, her list of things yet to be done; she read:

"Go to book store, find grocery store, find butcher shop, order ice, order milk, buy hair nets, get money from Harvey——"

Harvey broke in:

"How much money do you expect?"

"About fifteen dollars—and, oh, yes, I almost forgot to mention it: don't you think it would be convenient . . . good business . . . for you to give me a checking account at the bank—for household expenses?"

Harvey cocked his head to one side and looked at her insolently.

"Who do you think is head of this family?" he asked.

"Why, you are, of course."

"All right then, that's understood. When you need money you can ask me for it."

Eleanor laughed affectedly.

"My lord and master," she addressed him in ironic humility, "your humble and obedient wife is sorely in need of fifteen dollars. Won't you

be so generous and condescending as to give it to her?"

The crease left Harvey's forehead. He did not smile. He reached into his hip pocket and brought out his purse. From it he took four five-dollar bills. He passed them to her with a gracious air. During the rest of the meal he was in passably good humor.

"We're having dinner at home," she said to him just before he went back to the office.

When, late that afternoon, Harvey entered the little hallway at the end of which was the Landrum kitchen, his nostrils distended. The odor was acrid . . . the stink of organic matter being destroyed by fire.

"Hey, Eleanor!" he shouted. "The hog's burning."

Eleanor's excited footbeats were heard, and after a moment she came into the sitting room, flushed with heat and excitement and happiness. Harvey was standing in the center of the floor, inspecting the arrangement of things. Eleanor kissed him.

"Well, what do you think?" she asked.

"Pretty good," he replied. "I'll have to think about it a little; maybe you shouldn't have got wicker furniture for this room. I like the davenport. I don't like wicker stuff. It doesn't look

strong. I guess it is strong . . . as strong as any. But it looks sort of scant and feeble."

A new odor came through the door from the kitchen. This was of burning beans. Eleanor scurried to the rescue, and for the next few minutes was busy there. When she came back into the sitting room, Harvey was putting the last touches on his own design of a perfectly furnished room. He had moved the davenport from its place diagonally in front of the fireplace to a location against the wall. The library table, which had been just behind the davenport, he had placed jamb in a corner. He had placed the comfortable lounge chair, which had been beside the table, in the opposite corner, and had replaced it with a stiff-backed, uncomfortable chair, which now sat in solitude in the center of the floor. He would have moved the book cases if they had not been built into the wall between the windows.

There had been three pictures on the walls; now there were two. Harvey had taken from its hook, above the floor lamp, a print of "The Bathers," by the artist, Boucher, and had set it face down on a window ledge. When Eleanor came into the room to announce that dinner was ready, he was exchanging the other two paintings.

As she walked through the door and caught sight of the new order, she gasped, but that was all.

"Where's the other picture?" she questioned composedly.

He jerked his thumb toward the window.

"I don't like it; it's not decent," he said. "I'm going to write Mattie to send me the pictures in my room at the hotel. There's not much punch to these."

He stood in the middle of the floor and proudly surveyed his work.

"Room for a fellow to stretch his legs now," he said.

Eleanor laughed her affected laugh, a high trill of clear-cut, separate notes; she looked around the room as it now was and compared it with her own conception.

"What a wonderful housekeeper you are!" she said. "The other rooms impatiently await your fine, home-making touch.

"Dinner is served, but probably is not as good as it would be if an expert housekeeper had prepared it."

The point of her inference flashed through Harvey's mind like a flame. Housekeeper! Home-making touch! He was suddenly more angry than he had ever been in all his life. And

he didn't know precisely what to do about it. There was a segment in his mind that was cold and rational, even as the greater part of it was red with fury. That cold segment analyzed himself, and discovered that he lacked the power even to assert his anger . . . discovered, too, that it was anger so amalgamated with humiliation that he could not make out the line of distinction. He mumbled:

"Sorry. Fix it as you want it. Woman's job."

Eleanor's indignation dropped from her like a garment. She realized she had cut Harvey painfully, and she was regretful. She stepped to his side and caught his hand. She spoke to him gently, playfully, as to a little child who requires being humored.

"You funny old thing!" she said. "Fix it any way you like. Why, I don't care in the least. If it would make you happier to have the chairs hung from the walls, then I'd rather they'd be hung."

Harvey, in his eagerness to escape this absurd situation, thought, without reflection, that he had won a victory. He drew himself up to his full height, released the lower lip that he had sucked into his mouth in his expression of sulkiness, and said in his old, dominant voice:

"I like it as it is. I want it to stay this way." They ate a cold dinner, and in silence.

II

Before he went to sleep that night, Harvey had a wakeful hour for reflection on the incidents of the early evening, and he could not suppress, with all his capacity for self-justification, the persistent conclusion that he had been defeated again . . . that Eleanor had come out first-best in an encounter he himself had instigated with the definite purpose to cite his mastery.

As the days moved by, Eleanor forgot old incidents and found interest in new ones of her own arrangement and devisement . . . new dishes, new decorations, new amusements. While Harvey, worried, perplexed and afraid, would sit at his desk during the long day and, forgetting his duties, fall into dazed speculation, fearful that she had already discovered him, at times almost assured in his mind that Eleanor had seen through his carefully made mask and was understanding him for what he really was . . . knowing his whole lack of fiber in the silence of her mind and thinking of his lacking qualities as she went her daily way, he could not bear to think of her suspected knowledge of him while they were apart. Somehow he wanted to

be near her, facing her, when she thought such thoughts. Every afternoon, after the day's work, he hurried home in a state of indefinable dread, carrying with him the feeling that perhaps something had happened while he was gone . . . something that would reveal him—expose him. Nevertheless, he hurried, and hurried the faster. And when he reached home and found Eleanor absorbed in the process of preparing dinner, the relief was so great that he was cheerful for a few hours.

About a week after their occupation of the apartment, Harvey stood in the center of the sitting-room floor and pondered over a problem which had arisen in his mind every evening since the first. He had a newspaper in his hand. He looked toward a corner of the room, and then turned his eyes upon the stiff-backed, uncomfortable chair beside him, directly under the light. At last, with a resigned sigh, he lifted the uncomfortable chair and carried it to the corner. He pulled out the lounge chair, put the other in its place, and took the comfortable one to a spot directly under the light. He sat down and read his paper. The lounge chair was back in the place where Eleanor had set it. When she came into the room, Harvey watched her to see whether she would notice. Certainly she no-

ticed the change and must have been gratified, but she made no sign.

But late that night, after Harvey had gone to the bedroom, Eleanor rearranged the chairs. She placed the lounge chair back in the corner, and the other under the light.

When Harvey saw the next morning what she had done he was as offended as if he had expressly ordered her not to touch the chairs. He left for the office in a pout.

Things did not go so well at the office that day. The city editor had an opinion of his own with regard to the manner in which the big story of the day should be written, and when he brought the matter before Harvey directly after the latter's arrival, the city editor had been so forceful in offering that opinion that Harvey had taken the negative attitude even before he had known he was taking an attitude. Indeed, Harvey had no clear idea as to the trend of the story; the city editor had gone only so far as to tell him how he thought it should be written, when Harvey said in his blustering tone that he wouldn't allow any such story in any newspaper he had anything to do with.

The immediate upshot of it was that the city editor turned about and strode out of Harvey's office. Harvey thought the matter was ended.

When the first edition came off the presses, the story in question was in the left extreme column of the first page, just where it should have been. But it was the city editor's story, just as the city editor had planned it; and as Harvey read through it he was increasingly conscious of a mounting flush accompanied by a sinking feeling in his stomach.

He assembled his powers and walked in heavy strides into the city room. He had made his mind up that he would put the city editor in his place before the whole staff. The fellow had probably told the reporter who had written the story that the managing editor had ordered it otherwise. Well, he'd show the reporter and the rest of the staff who was boss in that office.

The city editor looked around as Harvey approached him, and sat waiting, twirling a pencil in his hands. Harvey scowled down at him.

"Mr. Evans," he said, "when I give you an order I mean for it to be obeyed."

"Yes?" Mr. Evans responded with a vague twinkle in his eyes.

"You understand that?" Harvey growled.

"Certainly, I understand it."

"Then, what did you mean by disobeying my explicit instructions this morning?" Harvey bellowed.

It was a moment before the city editor answered. Then he said in a tone of deep earnestness.

"Mr. Landrum, I had that story my way because it was the best way. I was positive it was a great deal better than your way; and I'm positive of it now. I'm working for this newspaper. I'm not working for you personally. While I'm ready and willing to take your orders when they're good and reasonable, I'm going to protect *The Leader* at all costs. If the story had been written as you suggested, *The Mail* would have beaten us on it. As it is——"

Harvey stood there dumb while Evans talked along in a mildly forceful though not insolent manner. At last he found speech and cut in:

"That's enough from you. You'll take my orders or you'll take the consequences." He turned and walked back to his office.

The longer he sat at his desk and reflected on the affair, the more discomfited he grew. He could not put down the feeling that he had not won the victory. Evans's quiet way of saying what he thought and justifying his opinion on the ground of loyalty had indubitably impressed the members of the staff and the office boys as the sounder foothold. Harvey sensed that Evans's stand had been clever demagoguery,

more than half *argumentum ad populum,* but that did not increase the integrity of his own position. He had been worsted, he had to grant. Then, something had to be done about it.

The front office, a big room that overlooked the street, was the sanctum of the publisher of *The Leader.* He was the Honorable Hector Coleman, one-time Mayor of Nashville, a man whose hand was in many a successful commercial venture in the city, a man who loved horses, cows, politics, baseball games, jokes and strong men. Hector Coleman was a strong man. He was the man who had hired Harvey to serve as managing editor of *The Leader,* and he had hired Harvey because Harvey had shown him how strong a man he, Harvey Landrum, was.

When, on the day of the city editor's insubordination, Harvey reached the conclusion that something must be done, he decided that he should report the mutiny to Mr. Coleman. And so, late in the afternoon, when word was brought to Harvey that the publisher had come into his office, Harvey entered without knocking and addressed Mr. Coleman as follows:

"This man Evans disobeyed an order of mine to-day——"

"Excuse me a minute," Mr. Coleman interrupted, turning to his secretary.

"Did Joe Dever telephone to-day?"

"Yes, sir," the secretary said. "He said to tell you Kitty Bluebell had a slight cold and didn't work out to-day, and that Jack Johnson trotted the mile in 2:28."

The publisher turned back to Harvey.

"Now, Mr. Landrum."

Harvey began all over:

"This man Evans has been insubordinate."

"The city editor?" Mr. Coleman asked in mild astonishment.

"Yes, I gave him an order and he deliberately disobeyed it."

"That's strange; I have full confidence in Mr. Evans. What was the order, if I may ask?"

Harvey told him.

Mr. Coleman relaxed and lighted a cigar.

"Oh, that's all!" he said. "Well, it seems to me that you ought to be able to handle that. It doesn't impress me as being so serious that you'd need help."

That comment struck Harvey in his painful spot. He thrust out his chest manfully.

"Help?" he blustered. "I didn't ask you for help. I've already settled the difficulty. I told him where to get off. I don't need any help from anybody."

The publisher looked at Harvey a little doubtfully.

"Then, why do you come to me with it?" he queried.

"Why, I just thought you ought to know; I thought you'd want to know how things were going."

"I haven't time to listen to reports of office squabbles," Mr. Coleman said coldly. "I hired a managing editor to attend to such things."

Harvey sucked in his lower lip, got his hat and went home.

III

Eleanor was not at home. She had gone to a picture show. Harvey went all through the apartment searching for her, and returned to the sitting room peevishly disappointed. He got the lounge chair from the corner and set it under the light. He went to the center table in the other corner to get a newspaper. On the center table was a large package, addressed to him. The address was in Mattie's rickety script. The package contained the pictures he had written her to send. He broke the cord and opened the wrapping. The picture on top was that of his father. He drove a nail into the wall and hung the picture over the bookcase.

The next three pictures were of prize-fighters

in combative postures. He cogitated for a long time before hanging them, but finally compromised with himself by placing one on the nail from which "The Bathers" had been removed, another in the kitchen over the sink, and the third on the bathroom wall. Then, while he was in the bathroom, an inspiration came. The incidents of the day left his mind entirely, and he chuckled gleefully. He recovered "The Bathers" from a closet where it had been put away, and hung it over the bath tub.

He went back into the sitting room, for there was more work to be done there. He had a print of the Battle of Gettysburg, and he hung that above the fireplace. There was a picture of a storm at sea, in vivid . . . almost lurid . . . color, and a pirate ship sinking. That was established between the windows. The last of the pieces was a large study of a hurricane, a little tropical island and angry, red clouds. He hung this in the bedroom.

In a much improved state of mind, he sat down in the comfortable chair to await Eleanor's return.

IV

She came in, her arms laden with bundles. In one hand she carried a paper sack that caught

Harvey's attention at once, for it seemed to be alive. He heard a scratching in it, and he saw it bulge on one side and then the other. He took it from Eleanor's hand, curiously, and at this change of station there sounded from the sack a plaintive and tiny "Me-e-ow."

Harvey grunted in disgust and let the sack fall to the floor. Out of it came a fuzzy little ball of kitten, as golden as a ring, with feet and belly as white as though it had waded belly-deep in flour-paste.

Eleanor dropped her sacks of groceries to the floor and reached down impulsively to salvage the remains of the kitten, but he was as sound and whole as he ever had been. She held him to her face and then held him forth to Harvey.

"Isn't he precious?" she said. "The grocer gave him to me; he was born in a barrel of sugar."

"I hate cats," Harvey responded, "I won't have him in the house."

"Oh, but you can't hate this one; he's so precious. He's like a toy sunset. He's so beautiful. You can't drive Miggles from the house. I've named him Miggles. Don't you think that's a cunning name?"

"I can't bear the touch of him," Harvey said. "Cats are slinking and scratchy and nasty.

They're for old maids and puny women. Dogs are men's animals. If you must get a varmint in the house, I'll buy you a dog. I won't have this brat in the house. You may take it back to the grocer now."

Eleanor gave Harvey a quick look, a sharp, bright look. She stamped her foot.

"I won't take him back. I love him, and he loves me. (Don't you, Miggles?) Harvey Landrum, this house is as much mine as it is yours, and I'm going to keep this cat if it's the only thing in the world I can keep." She turned suddenly and pointed a stiff finger toward the likeness of Kid McCoy in his palmy days. "Where did you get that horrid thing, and what do you mean by hanging these others in my house?" She pointed to the Battle of Gettysburg, and included the rest with a hand-sweep.

Her syllables had come "Clackety-clack," like machine-gun shots. Harvey had been taken by storm, and like the pirate brig, was feeling himself going down. He stammered:

"Why, why—they're *my* pictures. They're the pictures I had Mattie send me. They're *my* pictures. I like them. I want them."

Suddenly Eleanor's stern face was spread over with an all-pervading smile. Harvey had offended her and precipitated sharp words, and

now, in a clock-tick, there she stood with a smile that included all the good will in a closed universe.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she said in her mellowest tone, "I'll let you keep your ugly old pictures till Kingdom Come if you'll let me keep Miggles."

Harvey didn't answer. He looked fleetingly about at his array of art works, and then took his seat in the stiff chair in the corner.

Eleanor went into the kitchen, humming a gay tune. Harvey cast a furtive glance at Kid McCoy and muttered to himself:

"Who's head of this family, anyhow?"

CHAPTER XVIII

I

ON the afternoon that Miggles discovered his tail and speculated on whose tail it was, until he bit it and found out, Eleanor was preparing her first dinner for a guest. The guest was to be Mr. Coleman, and he was to come home from the office with Harvey. It was really a climactic event, for, although Harvey had said nothing about its importance, Eleanor knew somehow that the impression she and Harvey made at home would have a good deal to do with their future, in business, socially and maybe in other ways. Accordingly, she wished with due fervency that Kid McCoy could be thrown out the window and that Battling Nelson, who faced the mirror in the bathroom, could be consigned to the ash can. But she had made her bargain for Miggles' sake, and she was bound to hold to it.

Things were going very well. The roast had been in for three hours and the last time she had punched it with the fork the tines had come out

easily. The biscuit dough, made up and cut out, looked promising, and if she could prevent too hot a blaze, would grow into proper biscuits. Miggles was amazingly clean, having been bathed for the occasion, and was cunning and disturbed on account of a turquoise blue ribbon about his neck.

Eleanor heard steps outside the door, and so she quickly took off her checkered apron and hung it over Tom Sharkey, who menaced from above the kitchen sink. She looked at it a trifle wistfully, wishing there were some drapery so fitting for the champion of the sitting room, and then moved to the door to welcome her husband and their guest.

They arrived. The introduction was made stiffly:

"Mr. Coleman, this is my wife."

The three entered the sitting room. Directly facing the door was the invincible Kid McCoy.

Mr. Coleman looked at the picture and his eyebrows lifted. He stopped for an instant in unconscious study of it. Then he speculated on how Eleanor, so obviously well-born, so indubitably the thoroughbred, fitted in with the scenery. He looked to Eleanor and then back to the picture. He turned in time to see her face red with a blush. He understood the situation.

Harvey saw his glances; he saw Eleanor's suffused face. He was proud.

"Eleanor," he said, "get Mr. Coleman a cigar."

She went into the bedroom to get the cigar box, bought for this occasion, from the chest drawer. Harvey and Mr. Coleman took seats. Miggles wandered in from the kitchen, palpably ill at ease. The turquoise blue ribbon had come untied in one of its bows, and Miggles was stopping every two or three steps to stare at it dolefully or run in circles after it.

Mr. Coleman watched Miggles' futile efforts and laughed. Harvey misinterpreted the laugh. He was the one who blushed now.

"I hate the little brat," he said apologetically, "I let it live just to humor my wife."

"You wouldn't kill it?" Mr. Coleman asked with a curiously alarmed expression.

"No," replied Harvey, "I don't think I'd kill it. But I like dogs. A dog's a man's animal." The last sentence was a high-pitched boast.

Eleanor was desperately hopeful that Mr. Coleman had come with clean hands. He had not. And so she resigned herself to her conviction of his amused contempt upon his seeing Battling Nelson reflected in the bathroom mirror. She retained a vestige of hope, in that he

might not see the exaggerated nicety of "The Bathers" over the bath tub. She had long had a feeling that such a sense of fitness was a little too much of a coincidence.

Before the evening was done, Eleanor's confidence was somewhat restored, for the dinner was a wonderful thing, a revelation to Mr. Coleman, according to his own confession, and a satisfying event for Harvey, who demonstrated as much. And Harvey was on his best behavior. He went even so far as to agree with Mr. Coleman that Herefords are more satisfactory stock than Aberdeen-Angus, although Harvey had had no more acquaintance with either than his disinterested observations at the county fair. Moreover, Harvey made a concession to his guest after a spirited discussion on the relative merits of mountain trout and black bass as game fish, the decision ultimately resting with mountain trout, although Harvey had never seen either mountain or trout except from the panorama-making vantage point of a train window . . . and then only the mountain, not the trout.

After this satisfactory evening was done, Harvey was in a glowing mood. He was almost jubilant. He kissed Eleanor for the dinner, and it was a gentle, appreciative kiss. He re-

formed and recalled jokes the publisher had related while she was washing the dishes, and told them to Eleanor, laughing so unrestrainedly before the points were reached that they were invariably unintelligible to her.

They lay quietly for a while before falling asleep. Harvey cut the silence with expression of a passing thought:

"If I owned the paper I know one man who'd be looking for a job."

"Who?" Eleanor asked.

"Oh, there's a fellow there that's no good."

There was another period of quiet.

"He asked me to go to a fight with him Saturday night."

"Who, the fellow that's no good?"

"No. Coleman."

"Oh! A prize fight. Are you going?"

"Certainly, I'm going. What's to stop me?"

"An earthquake or a typhoon," Eleanor replied.

Harvey grunted good night.

II

At the office, Harvey was the Harvey Landrum of *The Jacksonian* for the next three days. His air of authority was with him every minute, and he saw with arrogant satisfaction that *The*

Leader was beginning to take form as a part of Harvey Landrum. He wielded his voice like a club, and in those three days two students at the university, who were working only during vacation, left the employment of *The Leader* because they were afraid not to leave.

It cannot be denied that the staff was about to become efficient. Old methods had been slipshod and easy-going; and Harvey was determined to make an end of such policies as had allowed lackadaisical efforts. He was reading *The Mail* with a gleaning eye, and every employee of *The Leader* knew that a better story, a better head, or a better page than the contemporary story, head or front page of the rival newspaper would forestall a visit to Harvey's office.

III

Friday night at dinner Harvey broke a tooth which was none too sound before he broke it. Eleanor had offered a dish of peas, since Harvey liked them very much, and in the aggregation there was a pebble the size of a pea. There is, as a rule, one pebble to one can of peas. Eleanor should have known that.

Harvey preferred to eat his peas in a porridge bowl, to crumble bread into them and to advance

upon them with a table spoon. He had been following this preference for some time when he bit down with such enthusiasm as only peas could inspire in him.

"Crunch!" went the pebble.

"Crack!" went the tooth.

"O—o—ow!" Harvey yelled.

Eleanor looked up in alarm. Harvey was holding a solicitous hand on his left cheek.

"What's the matter, Harvey, honey?" she asked.

He scowled at her for a moment before he answered:

"You just broke one of my best teeth. Oh, Lord, but it hurts!"

Eleanor ran to the medicine chest and fetched back a box of aspirin.

"This is the best I could find," she said. "Take two tablets with a glass of water and it'll stop after a while."

"What the hell's the idea of putting bullets in peas?" he asked irritably. "You've nearly killed me. I can't stand it much longer. Now I've got to go to some damned dentist." He almost sickened at the thought. He shuddered. "I hate dentists; I've always hated 'em."

Eleanor was triflingly irritated. She let the

box of aspirin fall to the table top. She looked at him scornfully, and said:

"Don't be such a baby—or coward." The last was added in a low voice. But Harvey heard. His anger flared, and he stood up and caught Eleanor by the arms, holding her tightly with his monstrous hands.

"I've a good mind to beat you," he snarled. "If you ever do anything like that again, I will beat you. I'll show you who's head of this house. By God, I'll show you."

Eleanor turned cold as ice and white as snow. Her voice, when it came, was as a keen whip.

"Harvey Landrum," she said, "take your hands from my arms!"

Harvey's grasp went limp, and he stood stupidly amazed, opening and closing his hands before his eyes, as if examining the process of muscle tension. Eleanor stepped one pace nearer him and Harvey moved back a pace.

Then came her high-pitched, clear-toned laugh.

"So you think I broke your tooth!" Her voice was almost gay. "You blame me for an act of God. Well, maybe God and I together did it."

Her laugh pealed higher. She picked up

Miggles, pressed him to her face and went into the bedroom. Harvey slumped down before the uneaten peas and buried his face in his hands. His tooth was aching painfully.

IV

When morning came the pain in the tooth was gone. Harvey had groaned and moaned during the night, but Eleanor had not been awakened, or, if she had, her sympathy had not. He ate breakfast without a word and set out for the office half an hour early. As he stood at the door he said to Eleanor:

"I won't be in until late to-night. Mr. Coleman and I are having dinner together, and then we're going to the fight."

Eleanor stood before him and looked up into his eyes.

"Good-by," she said plaintively. Tears were about to come.

Harvey caught her in his arms and kissed her. He fled down the stairs.

V

Affairs moved along at the office that day without Harvey's attention. He sat in his little compartment involved in the tangled skeins of troubled thought. He regretted the concession

he had made in kissing Eleanor good-by. He reflected bitterly on his cravenness of the night before, when he should have beaten her so thoroughly that she might never again question his strength. He tried to justify his failure to make some manful assertion by fixing the blame on his aching tooth and consequent distraught state of mind. He could not convince himself that the tooth had been responsible for his cowardly exhibition.

He attempted then to convince himself that his cowardliness had been strength . . . that he had not beaten Eleanor because she was weak and he was strong, because she was a woman and he was chivalrous. He could not. He laughed ironically at the feebleness of this argument.

Now there was left no doubt in his mind. Eleanor saw him now as a weak bully. The theatricals had ended. There was little hope that he could reëstablish her respect for him. It was a bitter realization. His pretence of strength had been his breath of life. Unless it stood and were accepted as real, life would not be worth living. He could not endure the thought of life with Eleanor if she were to see him for what he truly was. It would wreck his life entirely.

So long as he could project the illusion of his

power before his whole world, then for just that length of time could he maintain the illusion of self-respect. If he were a weakling in the sight of Eleanor and an apparently strong man to the rest of the world, he would be dishonest, a hypocrite. He did not want to be a hypocrite. He doubted that he could be a successful hypocrite. The problem of Eleanor had already disturbed his life at the office; his worry over it had prevented his assiduous tyranny, as it was preventing it at this moment. If an open break were to come and she were to tell him in tangible phrases what she knew about him, it might wreck him entirely. It would wreck him entirely. His life at home would be a virtual hell and the specter of his weakness would mock him unendurably.

A startling idea crashed on his mind!

He could leave her; he could send her back to her father; he could arrange gossip so that it would be understood that she had failed to come up to his high standards. And Jackson would be eager to understand that, he knew. That would save him. Then he could live alone with his secret. That would *save* him! He could go on and on, increasing his reputation as he had increased it in Jackson. Yes, he was convinced of it now: Eleanor was a handicap to his prog-

ress, even as other men's wives had been obstacles to them.

He was working himself into a state of righteous indignation, when his trend was arrested by the occurrence of a flaw in his scheme: Suppose he should dismiss Eleanor and send her back to Jackson; what would Eleanor say and do? What would he say and do in Eleanor's position in such an event? Why, he would tell his side . . . tell it far and wide. Then, that's just what Eleanor would do. She would tell her father, and Fannie Ertle, and William Simmons . . . everybody would know it. And she would express her conclusion that he was a weakling and a coward.

There was but one decision to be made: he couldn't afford to have her go back to Jackson. He'd have to keep her, since she knew his secret; and he'd have to prevent her being given cause or opportunity to expose him. Besides, it occurred to him incidentally, it wouldn't be quite fair . . . it would be a little mean and sneaking . . . to send her away to save himself.

But what the devil could he do? He couldn't go on like this!

Suppose Eleanor had been brooding at home that morning. Suppose she had decided to leave him and return to her father. The fear

assailed him like a knife thrust in a nightmare. He reached for the telephone and called the number. Eleanor answered. Harvey didn't know just what to say. But his heart subsided a little as he heard her clear voice. He stammered: "You're feeling all right, are you?" She assured him she was, and thanked him for his solicitation. Then he explained:

"I just called to tell you that I won't be home to dinner. Mr. Coleman and I are going to the fight."

"I know," she said. "You told me this morning."

He hung up the receiver, ashamed of himself for having called, and resentful of Eleanor because his explanation had been so lame. He thought she might at least have been a little more tactful, and pretended he had not told her.

If he could only show his strength . . . prove it to her again as he had proved it to her before their marriage! That would probably . . . certainly . . . clear up the unhappy plot, and he could go ahead to the ends he had set for himself. Why couldn't he show her? Wasn't there some way? She probably believed him afraid to beat her. Anyhow, it must have appeared so to her when he had faltered the night before. Well, that was a chance. He could

beat her, and convince her forever that he was master.

Yes, that was it. That was the only way. If he could not make her respect him he could make her fear him. And there was not much difference. If he could only make her enough afraid of him, he wouldn't care what thoughts she might be thinking and keeping to herself. Then, that was the solution. The only solution. And a good solution, too.

He would bide his time. He would wait for good cause. He would be clear-minded and premeditative about it. He would wait until she was absolutely in the wrong, and he advocating the right. The occasion might not arise for weeks, or months; but it would come eventually. And he could wait. Wait confidently. And be an abler man, a more confident and self-assured man, during the period of waiting, because of the presence of the prospect of a settlement.

CHAPTER XIX

I

BOXING exhibitions in Nashville are held in a hall above the largest garage in the city. After their dinner, which was eaten at the Hermitage Hotel, Mr. Coleman and Harvey entered a taxicab and were taken directly to the arena.

Harvey had never seen a boxing contest. He had taken part in many a fight, and had seen little boys fight, but he had never been privileged to observe a scientific combat between trained men.

As he and the publisher went into the hall and strode down an aisle to their seats at the ringside, Harvey looked about him interestedly. The first preliminary was just about to begin. A dapper youth in a gray checkered suit was standing in the center of the ring and chanting in a shrill tenor voice, as he pointed a rigid arm and finger toward a pale-faced little fellow in a red-splotched bathrobe:

"And in this corner, Young Fleming, pride

of North Nashville, weight: one hundred and twenty-two and a quarter pounds."

Tobacco smoke had already risen to the rafters, and Harvey felt a little depressed as he sank down into his chair, in the first row ringside. Young Fleming and his opponent were now standing opposite each other, and the referee, between them, was talking in a low tone, first to one, then to the other. He spoke in a half-whisper to Fleming, and Fleming nodded his head in understanding. Then he sent them back to their corners.

Helpful aides to the combatants pulled their respective stools from the ring, a bell sounded, the two men stepped quickly to the center, a general chattering went up on all sides, somebody yelled: "Sock 'im, Fleming!" Fleming socked him, Harvey held his breath.

Both men were fairly clever. Fleming blocked and side-stepped like a veteran, and for the first half of the round was content to show the spectators how futile a conquest the other had essayed. Harvey began to find it interesting.

Then somebody far back in the crowd called: "Cut that stalling and give us some action."

Young Fleming grinned and continued his defensive tactics.

Many others of the spectators took up the cry:

"Make 'em fight, Mr. Referee."

"Hey, this ain't no dancing party!"

"Can that fiddling and sock 'im."

Feet began to tap the floor in two-step time; a little group near the entrance door joined in humming a popular tune.

Young Fleming looked toward his corner and saw his manager nod his head. Then he stepped back quickly, his right foot forward, stepped in quickly with his left arm shooting forth, and, as his adversary lifted his glove to protect a threatened nose, brought an earnest right glove, with a sharp upward arc, "plunk" to the stomach.

There was a grunt and a tensing of the face as the man clutched his stomach with his gloves and bent forward, and a shrill, persistent voice rose above the mild general din with:

"Right in the bread basket!"

Harvey looked on fascinated, while Young Fleming danced on tiptoe, jabbed, hooked and slashed.

The bell sounded. Harvey relaxed in his chair. The two men went to their corners. Harvey turned to Mr. Coleman.

"The boy's good," he said.

"Fast as a streak," Mr. Coleman agreed.

Harvey ate a peanut, and had difficulty swal-

lowing it after he had had difficulty chewing it.

The bell rang.

Young Fleming came to the center. The other battler sat stubbornly in his seat, while a manager and a second vigorously prodded him. He would not budge.

A voluminous and long drawn "Boo-oo-oo!" was raised.

The referee perfunctorily raised the gloved hand of Young Fleming. Young Fleming hopped gaily over the ropes and went to the dressing room. Admiring men hailed him as he passed. He grinned happily and waved his gloves aloft.

The other man was running a gantlet. As he walked through the aisle, men left their seats to be nearer to him. They hissed and booed, and the man with the persistently strident voice yelled out above the rest:

"What a fine bum you are!"

The vanquished fighter ducked his head in shame and hastened his steps.

There was a hiatus. All about him, Harvey heard talk of the final, the main bout of the evening. There was a certain Knockout Jensen who had come to Nashville a month before and had won three fights in succession, each so expeditiously that Nashville was coming to look

upon him as invincible and had begun to claim him as a local product. He was to be opposed to a Memphis heavyweight, a fighter of considerable attainment . . . Jensen's first real test, the newspapers called it . . . and followers of the game were eagerly hopeful that Jensen would win.

Harvey wished fervently that he knew enough of the glossary of boxing to talk expertly. He felt slighted when Mr. Coleman turned around in his seat to talk of the fight with a man who was obviously a laborer.

Two men came into the ring. The announcer introduced them. The seconds adjusted their gloves. The referee called them to the center. They went back to their corners. The gong rang. The antagonists advanced cautiously.

It was a mere exhibition between two fast, light-hitting middleweights, each afraid of the other. They feinted and side-stepped, blocked and back-stepped, ducked and fancy-stepped. The battle went its scheduled eight rounds, and when it was called a draw, not a man among the spectators cheered. It was the sort of fight men despise.

Strangely, Harvey liked it. He turned to Mr. Coleman and said:

"I call that pretty."

The publisher looked at him curiously.

"I call it a joke," he responded, and turned to the hard-faced man in the seat behind him.

Harvey recalled the first fight, and found himself sympathizing with the fellow who had refused to come out for the second round. He felt ashamed of his sympathy. He muttered to himself:

"I hope the next one's a murder."

The third fight was the semi-final. It brought together a pair of middleweights, Jimmie Marvin, "the idol of Boston," and Battling Burke, "Nashville's best."

After the formalities had ended, the two men charged head-on and met with a crash of gloves. They swung long arms from far distances, missed each other, spun about to catch balance, rushed together again, pushed the slight-framed referee aside, tugged and pulled.

Perspiration filtered from their shining bodies and mingled with the oil which had been applied before the fight. Their supple backs bent and strained and glistened under the light as they wrestled about the ring while the meager official tried ineffectually to untangle them.

Each was confident he was the stronger hitter, and each was willing to trade blow for blow with

the other. Before the round was ended, the crowd was on its feet, shrieking hysterically, praying with deep emotion, praying to Battling Burke, Nashville's best, to knock the idol of Boston from his pedestal.

Burke responded with a sweeping blow that landed with a noisy thud on Marvin's flat nose. Blood spurted half the distance across the ring.

Harvey put his hand over his eyes.

He smelled the commingled odors of oil and sweat and bodies.

He heard a thud and a thump and a change in the tone of cheering.

He looked up.

Battling Burke was on his left side, feebly trying to assemble his faculties and attain his feet. The referee was tolling the seconds with a pendulous arm. The idol of Boston strolled back and forth a few yards away, a dull gleam in his eyes, his face and hairy chest a smear of blood.

The count reached ten, and there was a polite ovation for the visiting victor.

There was a mist before Harvey's eyes. His head was whirling. He was almost sick.

He heard Mr. Coleman's voice as if it were on the other side of a wall:

"Two one-round knockouts so far! That's

pretty good for one evening. We'll get home early."

Harvey looked at him glassy-eyed, and responded with an effort:

"Yes, but I sort of wish the fights would last longer. That last fight would have been a wonder if it had gone four or five rounds."

"Well, you'll see a great battle now."

II

Jensen was first to come into the arena. No public hero could have inspired more panegyrical shouting. He stood in his corner and bowed. Then he caught the ropes with his hands, rubbed his feet in the rosin as a militant rooster scratches in the sand before a battle, and flexed his legs by spreading them open and then springing back to his full height three or four times, like a frog rising from the bottom of a clear pool.

He was a big, raw-boned blond fellow, straight-backed and long-waisted. His muscles moved under his fair skin like quicksilver on a surface. His brow was low. His eyes were little slits through which the pupils glinted. His hair was short and bristly. His jaw was prominent and his chin was thrust forward like an open challenge to the world. Harvey remarked to himself that Jensen looked like the oil paint-

ing of his father. He instinctively disliked Jensen and hoped to see him defeated.

Then the other man came into the ring. He was a tremendous, hulking fellow, dark-hued and sinister. His nose was flat as a result of many blows, and his ears looked like distorted mushrooms. His mouth was a red slit. But his most obvious feature was an extraordinarily short, square chin. The chin was there, but one had to look again to be assured.

Jensen rushed over and met his adversary, and shook his hand.

The fellow scowled, and Harvey heard him say to Jensen:

"So you're the bum I'm goin' to knock cock-eyed!"

"Yep, I'm him," Jensen said with a grin.

Harvey had been looking at the newcomer as if enchanted. He could not take his eyes from the man's face. It somehow fascinated him, and depressed him. He found himself taking a side in the issue, and his partisanship was mingled with a sense of personal bitterness. That man up there might be himself, he reasoned, and the other man might be everything he had to fight. And, he reflected with a gust of pride, he had fought; had fought valiantly.

He turned to Mr. Coleman.

"I'll bet you ten dollars Jensen is knocked out," he offered.

Mr. Coleman looked at the short-chinned heavyweight and then at Harvey. His eyes twinkled a little.

"All right," he said, "it's a bet."

The announcer took his station and lifted his megaphone to his lips.

"In this corner," he cried, waving toward Jensen's corner, "is Battling Knockout Jensen, heavyweight champion of Nashville; and in this corner," pointing to the other battler, who sat relaxed against the ropes, "is Fishface Thompson, heavyweight champion of Memphis. Weights: Jensen, one hundred and ninety-eight pounds; Thompson, two hundred and twenty-six and a half."

At the mention of the Memphis fighter's name, Harvey's face took on an almost pained expression. He remembered the name, Snakeface, which had been affixed to him once. Then his loyalty to the Memphis fighter became a matter of self-justification.

The referee called the men to give them instructions. They went back to their corners and took seats for an instant.

The fight began:

Round One—They approached the center of

the ring with their right gloves extended to fulfill the courteous convention of the bare-knuckle days when opponents shook hands before a blow was passed. As their glove-tips were within an inch of contact, Thompson suddenly shot out his left and caught Jensen a sharp blow on the cheek. A voluminous unison of booes sounded, and the strident tenor rose above it with a long-drawn, "Dirty!" Jensen was rattled for an instant, but he immediately recovered his composure. He swung from the floor with a right which was wild. He was off balance but managed to clinch before Thompson could take advantage. Thompson punished the local champion with short chops to the kidneys. He bore down with his superior weight until the referee came between them. It was clear that Thompson was a crafty, experienced ringman. He obviously knew the tricks of the game, and used them without compunction. Jensen blocked and stepped cleverly for about a minute, causing the bigger man to miss several wicked swings . . . swings that had dynamite in them. Jensen stepped in with a sharp right hook that stung Thompson and roiled him a little. Thompson rushed and was met with a stiff left jab. He stepped back and rushed again. The same left jab stopped him short, and blood trickled from

his mouth. Thompson forced a clinch. He was beating a tattoo on Jensen's stomach when the bell sounded. It was a fairly even round, with Jensen leading by a shade.

Harvey sat agape with interest, following the destinies of his champion. He marked every change of expression in Thompson's face. He had never found anything so fascinating. Every blow Jensen landed was a mental shock to Harvey. When Thompson missed a hearty swing, Harvey felt the disappointment of it. When Jensen jabbed Thompson's face, Harvey gritted his teeth to meet the blow. When the blood trickled, Harvey licked his lip with a dry tongue.

Round Two—They fiddled in the center of the ring for a moment. Thompson said something to Jensen and Jensen struck out with a straight right. Thompson ducked and backed to the ropes. Jensen followed and hooked a hard right to the jaw. The blow hurt. Thompson clinched and swung the lighter man to the center of the ring. Jensen renewed the attack. He missed a terrific swing for the head and spun around. When his back was turned, Thompson drove a powerful left hook to the side of the head. The crowd expressed its displeasure. When Jensen faced about his expression was

tragically earnest. He crouched and sprang like a tiger. A series of jolts to the jaws and chin drove Thompson into a corner. The crowd was on its feet. Thompson suddenly straightened his back and shot out with a straight left. Jensen crossed a powerful right to the jaw and Thompson was down. The referee began to count. The crowd was in a state of hysteria. The count reached seven. The irrepressible tenor in the rear of the house rose high: "Farewell, Fishface!" The hulk of meat on the canvas came to life. He was on his feet, glassy-eyed and groggy, at the count of nine. He covered his head with his arms and crouched low. Jensen was excited. He worked furiously to beat down Thompson's guard. The bell saved the Memphis champion. It was Jensen's round.

Harvey was conscious of the old sinking feeling as they began the round. He was impatient for them to get into action. He heard what Thompson said to Jensen. It was an insult that a man of Jensen's type was bound to avenge. He saw the anger flash in Jensen's face, and as Jensen hurtled himself toward his enemy, Harvey felt sick and weak. He shut his eyes for an instant. When he lifted his head Jensen's back was turned to Thompson and Thompson was

starting a left hook. Harvey lost interest for a little while. When Thompson went down and the crowd raised its clamor, his interest was revived. He heard the word, "Fishface," and turned as though he had been jabbed with a pin. His whole heart went out to the fallen boxer. He cried out for him to come to his feet. When Thompson weathered the round and tottered to his corner, Harvey was exultant.

Round Three—Thompson came out of his corner with exaggerated eagerness. Jensen let him do the leading for a half minute, being content to stay on the defensive. Thompson led with a straight left near the center of the ring, and again Jensen crossed his right to the jaw. Thompson crashed to the floor. He was up at the count of five, and was attacking furiously. Jensen allowed him to spend himself. Then he measured Thompson for the knockout. The crowd was pleading for a knockout, and Jensen was determined to oblige. He sank his left wrist-deep into his opponent's stomach, then brought up his right to the chin. Thompson went down again. Again he came to his feet, swaying and dull-eyed, almost out. Jensen's persistent left opened an old cut over Thompson's right eye, and the blood poured profusely. Thompson fell into an embrace. Jensen shook

him off. When they separated Jensen was as bloody as Thompson, but it was Thompson's blood. Jensen shot a finisher for the jaw and missed by a hair. Thompson was now helpless. Hands at sides, jaw and body exposed, he sought the support of the ropes. He managed to back up against the ropes at one side of the ring, and he stood, loose-limbed and beaten, waiting. Jensen followed relentlessly. The excited crowd knew that it was only a point of seconds, and had become more calm. Jensen aimed a left hook and let go. Thompson went through the ropes and fell, a limp heap, into the lap of Harvey Landrum.

Harvey tried to get out of the way, but could not. Then he tried to push the sodden weight from him. His palms touched the wet, greasy skin. He caught the ugly odor of spent energy. He grew deathly sick. He stood, and the man fell to the floor. Harvey reeled and sat again, too weak to stand. He shut his eyes and his hands dropped limply. He was dimly conscious that one of his hands had stopped to rest in something viscous and sticky. He opened his eyes slowly and looked down. He jerked back his hand, and there came from his lips a cry in a broken voice:

"Blood! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!"

III

For minutes Harvey sat there, his eyes closed, his hands clenched, his brain mad and his heart heavy. He heard far-away voices and far-away laughter. A half-familiar voice among them carried words to his ears: "Landrum, come out of it; come out of it, I say." There was authority in that voice; it was a voice and a tone he could not afford to disobey, he realized. He opened his eyes. A curious crowd encircled him. In the forefront was the hard-faced man who had sat behind the publisher. There was scorn in the hard-faced man's eyes. His lip was lifted in disgust. Harvey saw him turn and move away, and heard him say to one whom he elbowed aside to make his passage:

"Naw, he ain't sick; he just couldn't stand the sight of blood."

Somebody near-by laughed. Somebody else called jocosely for smelling salts.

Mr. Coleman caught him firmly by the arm, and Harvey was led to the street. He was still dazed and weak. But he had consciousness enough to know that his day was done. He felt the need to try to carry it off with some pretense or other; but what was the use, he reflected.

Men stared and laughed as they passed out.

Mr. Coleman had added to Harvey's mortification by placing an arm about his shoulders and supporting him. But Harvey was not so mortified that he was ungrateful for the help. He could not have made his way alone through that picket of unsympathy.

"Brace up," said Mr. Coleman, after they had come to the sidewalk. "Get a grip on yourself. I never saw a man go to pieces like that. What's the matter, anyhow?"

"I—I think it must 'a' been a heart attack," said Harvey. Then he plunged desperately, eagerly: "I've had a weak heart ever since I was a boy."

"Yes?" Mr. Coleman questioned, and Harvey felt like a preacher's son caught in a lie.

"I'm much better now," Harvey declared. "I think I'll walk home. The walk will do me good."

"Don't you need me to help you?"

"No," declined Harvey, stiffly, with a vestige of his usual force, "I don't need anybody to help me. Good night!" He turned and walked down the street.

CHAPTER XX

I

BEFORE Harvey reached home that night he had worked himself into a rage against the world and every creature in the world. He was not conscious in a rational way. His homeward direction was reflexive. Perhaps, if he had been cold and clear-minded, he would have spent the night at the hotel as the easiest way out of it. As he trudged down Seventh Avenue, the figure of Eleanor took shape in his inflamed mind. It occurred to him that she was to blame for it all, that she had been the whole cause of his downfall . . . for he saw it as a downfall. Somehow, he knew he would never again be able to face Mr. Coleman with uplifted eyes. And somehow, he felt that all men must know of his disgrace. He remembered as in a fearful dream how men had looked at him as he had stood there at the ringside, trembling like a broken woman. He remembered, too, the scornful laugh of the hard-faced man who had sat behind Mr. Coleman. And somehow, it was all due to Eleanor.

II

She was in the kitchen making sandwiches when Harvey reached home. She had thought he might be hungry after a strenuous evening, and so had prepared refreshment for him. She heard him open the door and go into the sitting room. She quickly assembled her sandwiches onto a plate, put them on the table and waited. She expected him to come to her there, and wondered why he had not come already.

Harvey was in the bedroom, changing his clothing. Soon he came out, wearing his dressing gown. He walked aimlessly into the kitchen. He stopped just across the threshold and stared at Eleanor with an injured air.

"Well?" he questioned, as though he expected her to give an account of her evening.

"Did you have a good time?" she asked.

"Rotten," he said.

"I have some sandwiches for you. I thought maybe you'd be hungry."

"Well, I'm not."

Eleanor looked up with concern in her eyes.

"Did anything happen?" she asked. "You don't seem well: what's the matter?"

"I'm all right," he said, "but what business is it of yours?"

"Why, Harvey Landrum! What on earth is the matter with you? Of course it's my business. Whose else business should it be? I'm your wife."

"Yes, unfortunately!"

"Why, Harvey! I never heard of anybody's acting like this. You talk like a crazy man."

"Look here, Eleanor! I've had just about enough of your impudence. You've got to respect me. You've run things over me ever since we've been married, and, by God! you've finished. You understand, I hope. One more false move from you, and I'll show you who's head of this family. By God! I'll show you."

She stood watching him in astonishment.

He took a step nearer to her.

Miggles was at his feet, and his advancing foot touched the kitten.

With a snarl, Harvey drew back his foot and brought it forward again with all his might. A golden ball shot through the air and crunched against the kitchen wall. It dropped to the floor, and lay there twitching.

Eleanor looked down at the sprawled form of her pet. She stood in stupefaction for a moment, not seeming to grasp what had happened.

Harvey rubbed his hands together as though

he were cleansing them of some obnoxious matter and remarked:

"Well, I'm glad that's done. That finished that damned varmint."

Eleanor found her indignation.

"O-o-oh!" she quailed, "I hate you. I hate you!

"You coward! You miserable coward! I never want to see your face again." Great tears came down her cheeks.

She hastened to Miggles and was about to pick him up when Harvey stopped her by catching her wrist with a cruel hand. He whirled her about until her back was against the table and she was facing him.

"You called me a coward!" he cried. "You called me a coward! A miserable coward! I'll show you whether or not I'm a coward. By God! I'll show you! I'll beat you until you scream! Until you scream that I'm the strongest man in the world. I'll show you!"

He drew back his arm to strike her, and her heart went cold with hatred. She was not afraid. He might kill her, but she would not fear him. Suddenly she saw his face as she had never seen it before; it was not a human face, it was the face of a creature, a reptile. Then she despised him.

The blow was driven; instinctively she evaded it. His heavy fist scraped a streak of skin from the side of her face.

Then Eleanor turned primitive. The image of the carving knife with which she had cut the bread for the sandwiches took clear outline in her brain. She knew the very spot where it lay, more clearly than she had ever known the location of any object. Her hand reached for it. Harvey's hand was reaching for her throat.

She found the knife and brought it forth, drawn for an instrument. She stood fixed, holding it high, point forward. Harvey's hand had stopped in the air. He was transfixed, gazing in fascination at the upraised weapon. She saw his face become more tense, his eyes open wider, his nostrils distend. She heard his breath come faster. Then she saw him grow limp like a semi-solid thing. His hand relaxed on her arm.

"Oh, Lord!" he said, and his head dropped forward. He ran his hands across his hair. Then he covered his face with his hands. He trembled with a rigor.

He turned about and went into the sitting room. He sat in the comfortable chair in the corner, buried his face in his hands and sobbed.

Eleanor dropped the knife from her hand.

Then she bent over Miggles and placed her hand over his warm little body. Miggles was dead.

Eleanor picked up the limp little form and took it with her into the bedroom.

III

Two hours later, Harvey rose from the chair in the corner and walked unsteadily to the bedroom door. He turned the knob and pushed. The door was locked. He stood pondering for a moment and then called gently: "Eleanor!"

There was no answer. He called again. Still there was no answer. A dozen times he called, and each time his voice became more pleading. The old peremptory note was gone.

At last he gave it up and turned toward the sitting room.

"Asleep," he muttered, as if to reassure himself, but he knew she was not asleep.

He slept fitfully on the davenport that night.

IV

In the morning, Eleanor prepared his breakfast. She did not eat with him. Just before he left for the office, she questioned:

"Was the davenport comfortable?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then, hereafter, you will sleep there. The sitting room is all yours now."

"All right," he replied dully.

CHAPTER XXI

I

THAT day, after the outer door had closed behind a new Harvey Landrum, came to be the most difficult day Eleanor had ever had to live to its conclusion. She had had days of sorrow, but on such days her heart had been a thing of gravity. To-day her heart virtually did not exist; it was a vacuous area in her bosom to-day . . . so much of the void that tears and sensuous grief could not affect it. Once the proof of her sorrow had been the quantity of her tears. Now, the impossibility of tears set forth a new limit of sadness.

The dishes had been washed and dried, the bed made and the floor swept. She sat in the comfortable chair in the living room and tried to read the morning paper. Its headlines were meaningless words to her. The paper fell to the floor while she stared at space and reflected on her days. She had had a rich childhood and youth. Jackson had been generous and good. She was not young now. She was old. Life now was

a surfeit. She had deserved more. She could not have deserved less than she had won.

Maybe Jackson was still friendly and generous and kind. She could go back to Jackson, home to her father. He would receive her and love her. That was what she could do; and would do. She had stood for enough from Harvey. She could not endure more. She had given herself and all her faculties to him, and he had been more than ungrateful. She had accounted him a strong man. Well, he had fooled her.

She had been so sure she loved him! Well, she wasn't sure now. Had she really ever loved him? Did she love him now? Yes, she had loved him; but now? She couldn't tell from the beat of her heart, for her heart was not there. Anyhow, she pitied him now. She had told him she hated him, but that was in emotion. She had no hate for him. She was sure of that. Perhaps she loved him a little, but that was of no importance now. She had pride. Her pride was her strength, her beauty, her master. She could not go on with Harvey. Even with him subdued and cringing before her, the element of her pride intervened. For pride would no more submit to his cravenness than it might to her own. Harvey was a part of her. He always would

be. The waters of time might rush over her forever, but they could never wear away the bit of Harvey Landrum that had come to be a part of her. But she didn't love him. At any rate, she loved him very little. More than likely not at all.

Then she would go home. It would be the easiest way. She would go at once. If she should see him again she might feel too much pity.

She went into her bedroom and began to arrange her clothing as a preliminary to packing her trunk. She had made her mind up. She would go home.

She opened the door of the clothes closet. The first garment her hands touched was the little gown she had worn to Emma Rainey's party. She brought it forth and started toward the open trunk. Something deterred her footsteps. She flung the dress onto the bed. She sat down beside it. Her hands were clasped meditatively. She remembered the wedding. She remembered his strength. She remembered William Simmons and Egbert Turpin. A glimmer of light came to her eyes. She smiled faintly. She picked up the party dress and with firm step bore it back to its hanger in the closet. She

said to herself: "He was strong and fine. He's weak and broken now. Maybe he will be strong again." She closed the trunk lid.

Back in the comfortable chair in the sitting room, with the morning paper on her knees, she tried to explain the waverings of her mind. Her effort was to justify herself. She told herself she loved him, and was his own in spite of every intervention. But her pride would bear no such burden. There must be other grounds. There were:

"I married him," she thought. "If the mistake is great, I must still bear it. It is my mistake. Then I shall bear it. And I must help him. He needs help now. He needs help as no man has ever needed help. I can bring him back. I can save him. I couldn't leave him now. To leave him now would be to name myself a coward."

II

When Harvey came home that night, he was tired and listless. The excellent dinner Eleanor had prepared did not revive him. She was soft-spoken and gentle in her manner, but he would not accept encouragement. He read the paper, looked for a while into a book of short stories,

and then suggested to Eleanor that they close out the day. She went to the bedroom. He, without another word, prepared to spend another night in the sitting room. Eleanor's impulse was to countermand her order, but for some reason she could not bring herself to this concession.

The next morning, when she came out of her bedroom, Kid McCoy was missing from the living-room wall, Battling Nelson was gone from the bathroom, Tom Sharkey had abdicated the kitchen.

III

Affairs went on, unchanged, for a week. Soon, they began to be accustomed to their new relationship, and Eleanor was sleeping soundly in her lonely bower. Harvey, too, was showing signs of regularity, and at breakfasts he was fresh and cheerful in a short-spoken way. His heavy, domineering tone was gone. But he was not just what might be called friendly. He was keeping his distance. Once Eleanor advanced with a question:

"How are things at the office?"

He looked up from the book he was reading and replied:

"I've still got a job."

IV

It was at the beginning of the following week that a change came over Harvey. Monday evening, he ate very little at dinner. He told Eleanor he was tired, but she saw worry in his eyes. That night he did not read. He sat alone in the sitting room long after she had retired. He was brooding. At breakfast Tuesday morning he showed tired eyes. He had not slept. He was irritable. As he left for the office he did not even turn to look around. He had said good-by every morning since the climactic evening after the fight, although he had made no start to kiss her. This morning he did not say good-by.

When he came home that evening from his day's labor, he was limp. While Eleanor was preparing dinner Harvey sat in his chair in the living room. She looked in and saw him there, slumped forward, his face buried in his hands. She was conscious of a surge of pity. She forgot her dinner. She went to him with impulsive steps, and placed a gentle hand upon his head.

"Harvey," she said, "what is it?"

He looked up, and she saw fear in his eyes.

"What is it? Tell Eleanor," she persisted.

"It's—it's everything," he answered, and his tone was a symbol of futility.

"Is it something at the office?" she inquired.

"Yes, it's that and it's everything else. I—I'm just no good. I'm done for." His tone was rising in pitch. "It's my job, and it's myself and it's you—it's everything in the world."

"Have you lost your job?" Her inflection was maternally tender.

"No. Not yet. But I'm afraid. The way old Coleman looked at me to-day. The way the rest of 'em won't pay any attention to my orders. It's coming. I know it's coming."

Eleanor transferred her hand to his shoulder.

"Why, Harvey! You mustn't give up like that. You're a strong man. You've proved how strong you are. You've proved a hundred times that you are strong and fine. What's the matter? You're not ill, are you?"

As she reminded him of his strength, a little of it seemed to come back to him for an instant. He sat up straight, thrust his chest forward and held his head high.

"I was strong, wasn't I?" he asked.

"Of course you were," she reassured him. "I loved you because you were strong."

He turned his head and glared at her, and his face grew tense. He fought for words, and

when at last words came, his voice was almost shrill with excitement.

"I was strong. I was. I was," he cried, "And now I'm weak. Now I'm a failure and a coward. But I was strong. Before I married you I was strong. And I could be strong again! By God, I could be strong again!" His voice trailed away, and he buried his face in his hands.

Eleanor left him there and returned to her overdone meal. It was hardly fit to eat, but neither of them cared. There were no appetites in the Landrum house that evening. And in the night, Eleanor awoke from a fitful minute of distorted dreaming to mutter to herself: "Before he married me he was strong. And he could be strong again."

Her duty was clearly set before her.

V

It was almost three weeks after the tragic passing of Miggles that Harvey returned to the little apartment in mid-afternoon to confess fearfully that he had lost his position with *The Leader*.

He made his report to Eleanor with humble straightforwardness, seeming to assume that he deserved to fare no better.

"They offered me a place as a reporter," he

added, "but I couldn't accept that. I couldn't work there as a reporter.

"To-morrow, I'm going try to get a job on *The Mail.*"

"To-morrow," said Eleanor, "I'm going home."

VI

But Eleanor did not go home the next day.

CHAPTER XXII

I

IT was almost ten-thirty o'clock when Harvey Landrum left the office of *The Mail*. It had been about ten-fifteen when he had entered. His conference with the managing editor there had been brief and pointed.

He came down the stairway slowly. His head was bowed and his eyes were full of darkness. He started across Third Avenue in a ponderous walk, looking down at the pavement as though he were searching for something.

He had almost reached the other curb . . . he was no more than two long, quick steps away —a short fragment of a second . . . when a big red touring car came bearing down.

And in that flutter of an instant he solved the whole problem of life. He lived a short, rich life complete.

Fright made him moveless, and then, while there was yet time, gave him the faculty to leap and save himself. He did not leap. He did

not want to save himself. He thought of Eleanor, and of the famous respectability of more or less natural widows.

Then he thought of himself and forgot Eleanor. "The gesture is the thing," he thought, "the gesture is all."

And so he turned to face the automobile as it struck him down. He held his head high. It was his great climax. He knew that for this infinitesimal instant his courage was a fine courage. All that he wanted he had. And yet, with the inevitable return of his old self-pity, he knew that all circumstances had supported him in his rise to this climactic moment: that he would have quailed and failed if he had had one second more for premeditation. And so he repented fully, and in his honest pride was humble.

II

A clanging ambulance bore Harvey toward the City Hospital, and with him as its chief passenger persisted in raucous clanging as it cut through clear, unobstructed streets.

Eleanor was notified. She came directly to the hospital.

Eleanor was desperately anxious as she asked: "Doctor, do you think he'll live?"

"There's a chance that he'll live," the doctor

said gently, "but it's only a chance. Still, we must be hopeful."

"Yes, we must be hopeful," Eleanor responded dully.

"It's a fractured skull," the doctor went on, "and there's no way of predicting the outcome this early. We must always be hopeful, Mrs. Landrum, until we know the worst."

"I am hopeful," said Eleanor bravely.

She took her station at Harvey's bedside.

III

Harvey had an hour of consciousness the third day. When he awoke and saw Eleanor there, he feebly expressed his gratitude:

"You, Eleanor? I'm glad."

And then he asked:

"Will I die?"

She could not answer him; she could not look at him. She turned her head aside.

"Where's the doctor?" Harvey asked.

The doctor came.

"Tell me whether I'm going to die," Harvey said.

The doctor was hesitant.

"If I'm going to die," Harvey continued, "I want to see a preacher. I think I'd be afraid to die without one."

The doctor smiled.

"We are hopeful that you will live," he said, "but if you want a preacher we'll get you one. But we're very hopeful, Mr. Landrum.

"What denomination do you want?"

Harvey was quiet for a moment.

"Baptist," he said.

IV

Harvey was gone again into unconsciousness before the preacher had come. But before unconsciousness came, he said to Eleanor:

"Send for Mattie. I want her to pray."

V

When Mattie came the next morning, Harvey had been conscious for an hour. He had been told that he would live. Eleanor had left the hospital. There was no need for her to stay at the bedside now. She could be courageous. She could face stark situations. She could face Jackson.

The preacher was sitting by the bedside with a benign smile when Mattie's chair was rolled into the ward. He was holding the hand of Harvey, who lay there with a labored smile and a heart heavier than the burden of life before him.

"You are his sister," the preacher said to Mattie.

"Yes."

"Well, he's saved. Thank God, he's saved! He's on the Lord's side now."

Mattie bowed her head:

"O Merciful and Kind Father, Forgiver of the sinful, Protector of the weak . . ."

AFTERWORD

There may be a man somewhere in this world who is the identity of Harvey Landrum. The author has never known such an individual. But, long before he wrote this story, he began to grow aware of a Harvey Landrum quality in his own amorphous mind. And from this inductive beginning, he carried an inquiry into the minds of other men. Invariably, he found them moulding and remoulding their characters to fit the demands of their communities and their planes of civilization.

He found a man in a little town in Tennessee who, in his ingenuous heart, was sensuous and emotional. He saw this man go through a period of stress and gradual change. And when the travail was over, the poet had become a democrat and a social success, who knew how reprehensible it was to find glory in a rose.

In New York City, the author found among his friends one, mild and sweet and reticent, who saw how necessary it was to make all men believe that he was two-fisted and hard-hitting. And so

he blustered, and he swaggered. He is not now what God made him—he is a self-made man.

Here, he met another, born to lead, who fell before the doctrine of humility and cast away his precious arrogance.

And a woman, truly destined to have babies—who would not . . . who was determined that the world should know her as an appreciator of the finer things, such as plays on Broadway, the works of the Younger Generation, and psychology. She had no knowledge; nor will she ever have. She has thwarted God because it was the fashion. And it is the fashion.

The author has seen a deacon who was born for the world. A worldling born for the monastery. A priest born for the prize ring.

The author of this story is a Harvey Landrum. At times he finds himself convinced that he is real and important and indispensable. He sees how necessary it is for his friends to see him at his strongest. He sees how necessary it is for him to prevent their seeing his frailties. Always he is purse-proud, and he has no purse. Always the world turns upon his axis, and he has no axis. Men stare at his run-down heels, and he sticks a red rose in his buttonhole. Men discover fallacies in his arguments, and he perverts them to intentional travesty to leave the im-

pression that he was not serious from the first. He has a limerick:

There was a young man with a nose
The color and shape of a rose,
So he wore a green hat
And a purple cravat
And nobody noticed his nose.

The young man with the nose employed a Harvey Landrum principle. He sought to distract attention. Harvey Landrum also sought to distract attention, but he had no such simple fault as a nose the color and shape of a rose. He lacked an abstract something, which deficiency he had to conceal. And the only way possible for him to conceal it was to prove opposite qualities. He had to be master of his house, else life would not have been worth living.

Taking all things into consideration, giving Harvey Landrum his fair due, the author cannot fail to see him as an admirable person. He excites the author's pity at times, his sympathy at times, his anger at times. Under the prevalent standards, he did the courageous thing. He began with nothing, and, overcoming all obstacles, built himself character. And are not we all urged to start with the little we have and make of

it all that the world admires? None of us succeeds without emulating Harvey Landrum.

And at last, each of us reverts to the chinless.